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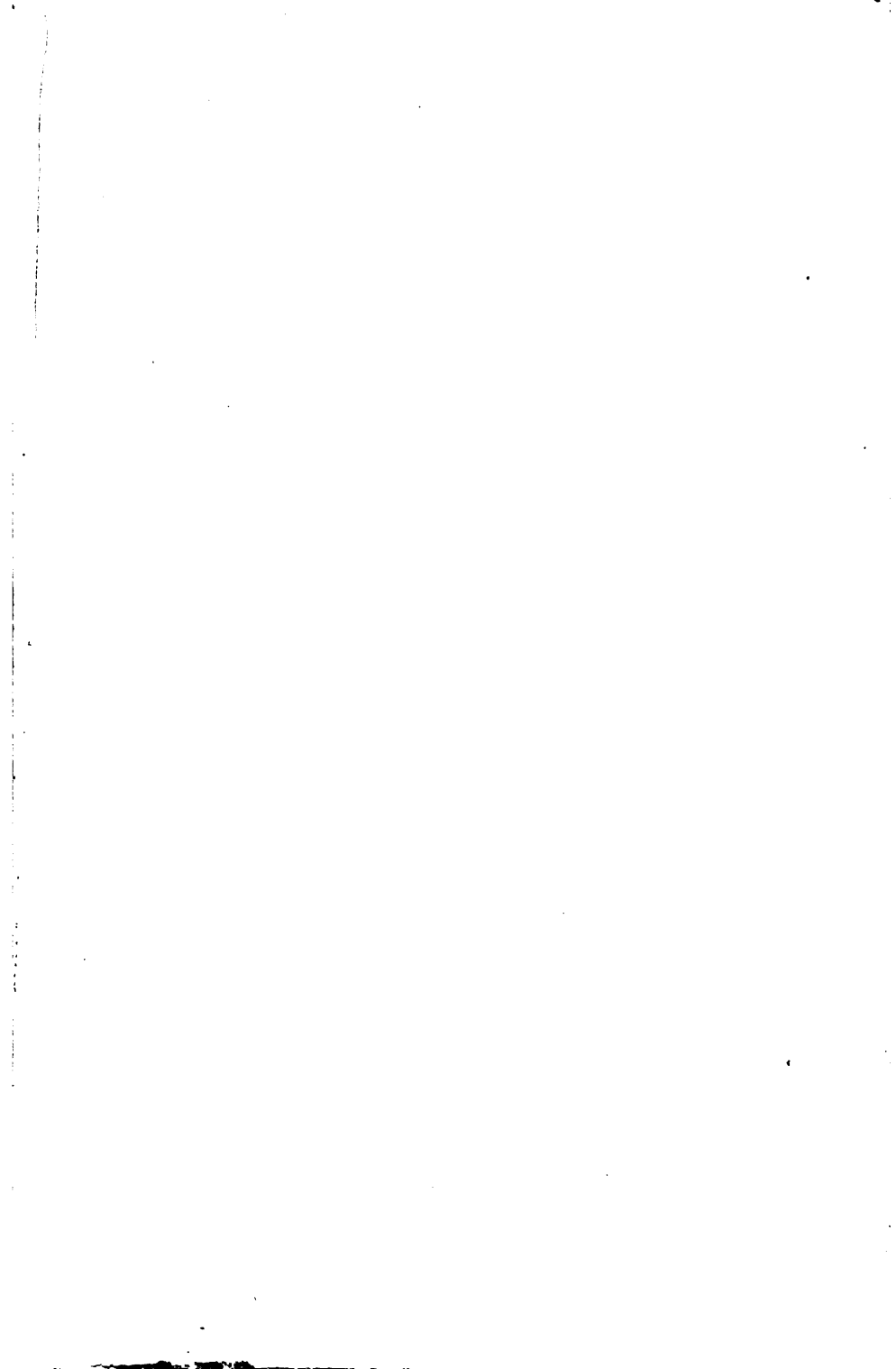
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IN PREPARATION
A VOLUME OF
LYRICS
ENTITLED
ON THE SLOPES OF HELICON
AND OTHER POEMS
BY
LLOYD MIFFLIN

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BOSTON

THE NEW YORK
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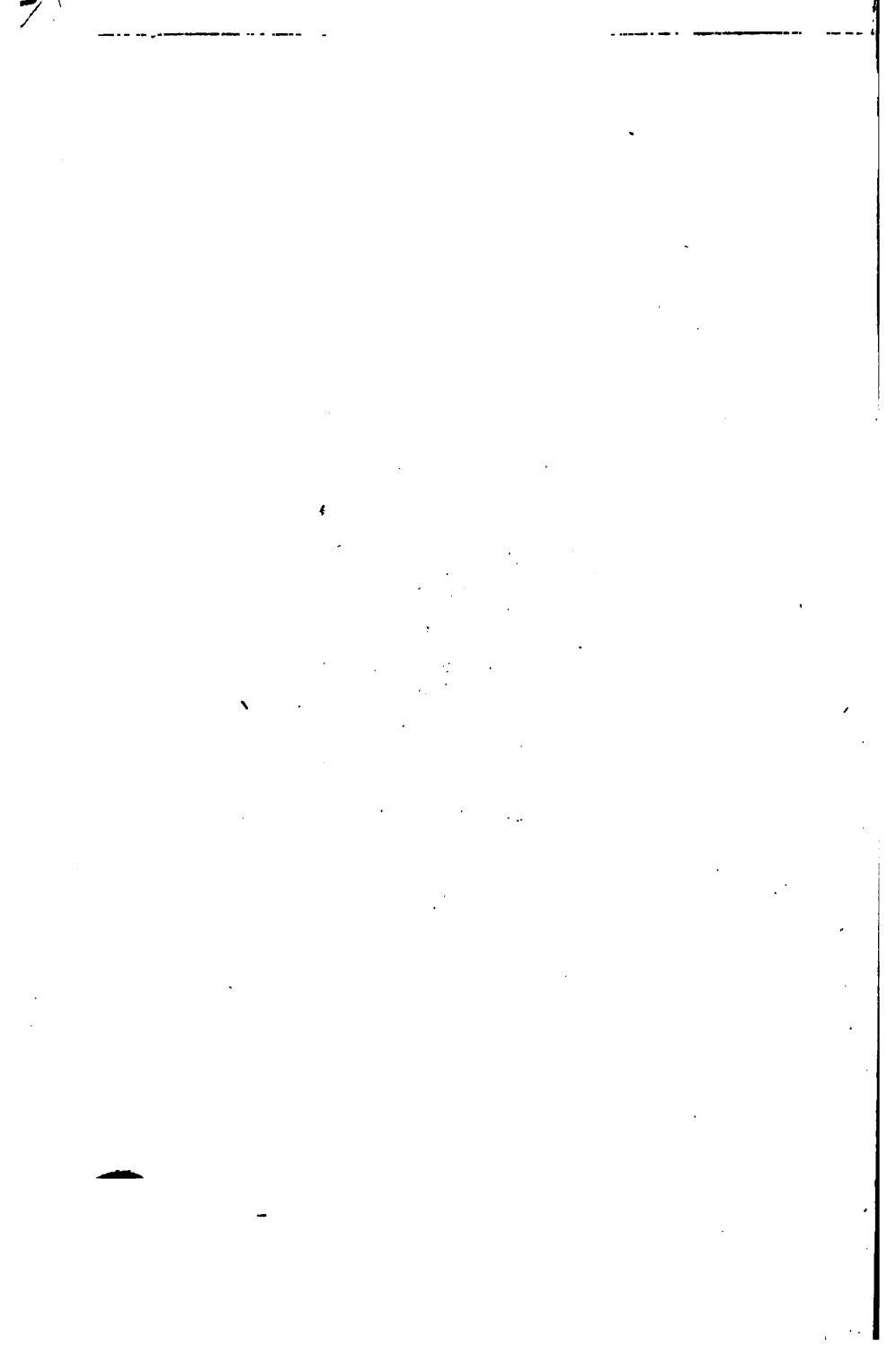
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4



AT THE GATES OF SONG

SONNETS

BY

LLOYD MIFFLIN

The buildings of my fancy

SHAKESPEARE

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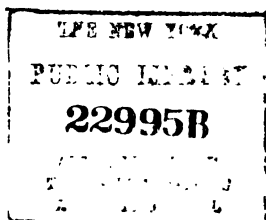
THOS. MORAN, N. A.

Second Edition

BOSTON
ESTES & LAURIAT

MDCCCXCVII

EVD



FIRST EDITION
JUNE
SECOND EDITION
NOVEMBER
1897

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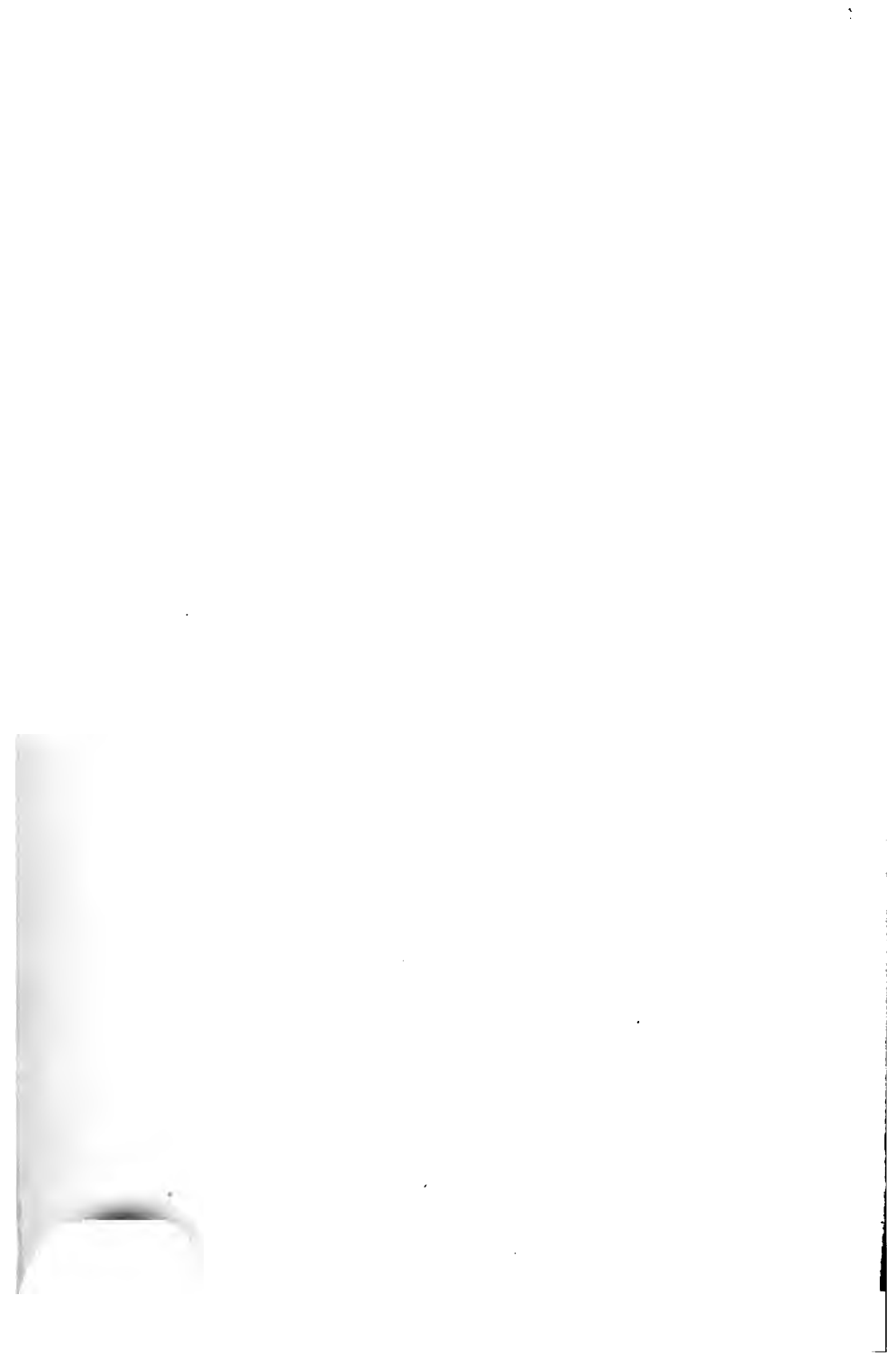
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WORDSWORTH TO B. R. HAYDON

1815

HIGH is our calling, Friend!—Creative Art—
Whether the instrument of words she use,
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues,—
Demands the service of a mind and heart,
Though sensitive, yet, in their weakest part,
Heroically fashioned—to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert.
And, oh! when Nature sinks, as oft she may,
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
And in the soul admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness—
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard!

WQ R 19 FEB '66



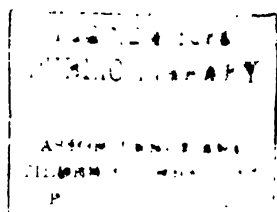
Inscribed to the Memory
of
J. HOUSTON MIFFLIN

Obit
MDCCCLXXXVIII

A *N* idealist ; a passionate lover of imaginative poetry ; himself a writer of melodious verse ; a portrait painter of subtle delicacy ; a thorough "gentleman of the old school" whose polished and courtly manners were but the flower of an innate refinement and a beautiful life ; impetuous ; generous ; honorable ; supremely unselfish ; a man among a thousand—*My Father—to whose dear Memory I dedicate this Book.*

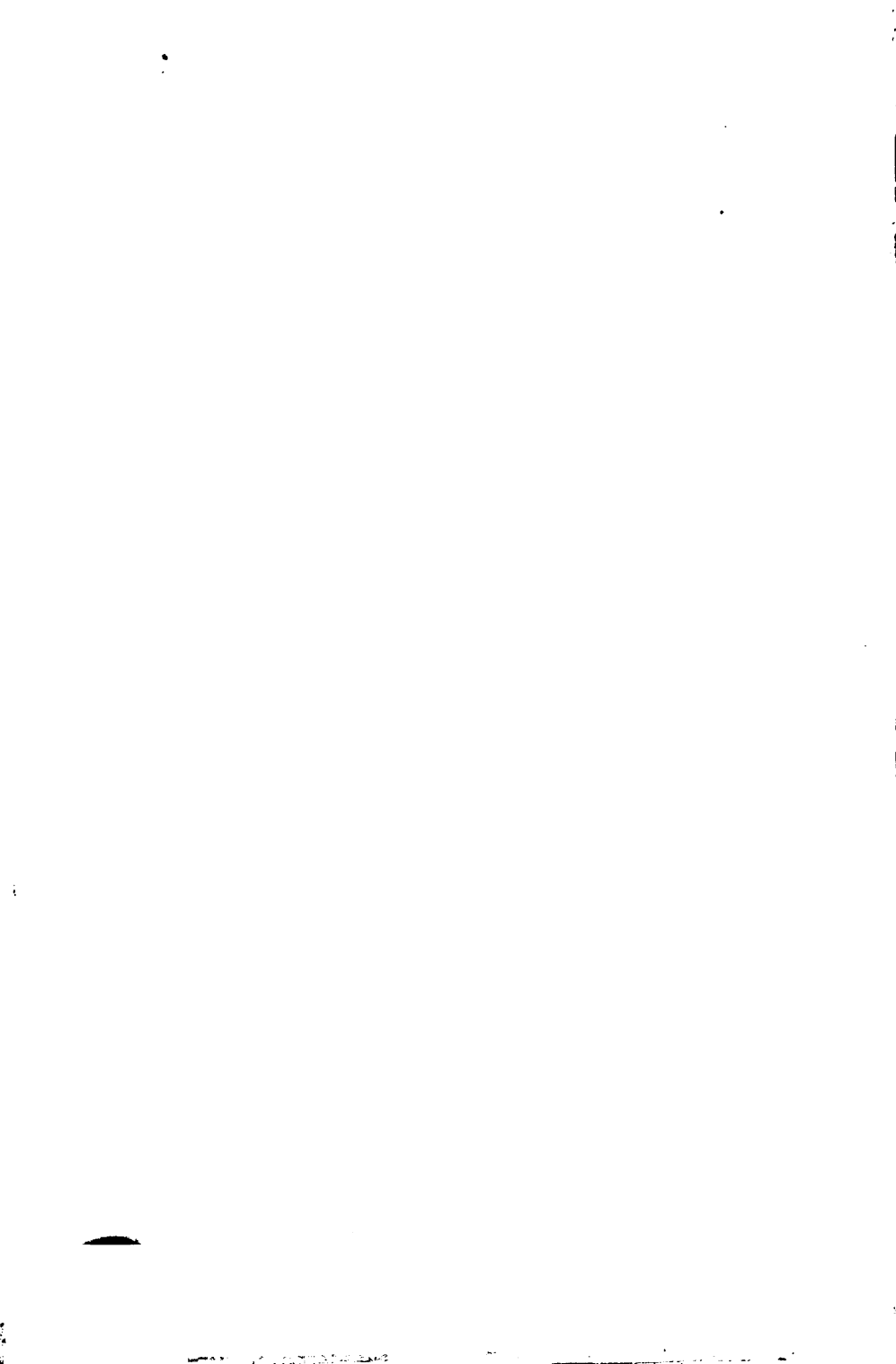


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THOMAS MORAN. N.A.



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PREFACE

When one has given more than twenty years of life to the study of Poetry and Art, he may, perhaps, at the end of that time be entitled to be heard through the medium of his verse; and while it is with no unappreciative sense of his own temerity that the Author here essays to enter the brilliant field of the English Sonnet—a field made resplendent with achievement from the time of Wyatt to our own—yet he is proud in the consciousness, that if he has added nothing to the lustre of that narrow and intricate domain of literature, at least he has not tarnished it with anything indecorous and unseemly.

“The Sonnet,” says Leigh Hunt, “is unappreciated by those only who do not understand it.” The rampart of difficulties—sometimes almost insurmountable—with which the Sonnet form is surrounded, has dissuaded many an impetuous poet from attempting this form of English composition;

PREFACE

nevertheless, as a vehicle of artistic expression the Sonnet remains supreme.

A recent writer of distinction has well said: "To approach the public with the Sonnet is to take the narrowest and hardest path to popular recognition." Yet there are always a few people of æsthetic culture who supremely value a fine conception, a figure of speech, impassioned language, and a distinguished diction. To these poetry will always appeal; and small and inconspicuous as is this minority at the present time, it will, after this spasm of realism shall have passed away, grow larger and stronger as the years increase.

With a fine enthusiasm Matthew Arnold has said, "The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Poetry will never lose currency with the world in spite of momentary appearances; it will never lose supremacy. Cur-

PREFACE

rency and supremacy are insured to it, not indeed by the world's deliberate and conscious choice, but by something far deeper;—by the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.”

Let us hope that even in this country—given over as it is to mammonization—this glowing prophecy may yet be realized.

THE AUTHOR.

“NORWOOD,” JUNE, 1897,
COLUMBIA, PA.

NOTE

TO THE SECOND EDITION

The Author wishes to express here his appreciation of the most generous commendation which his work has received from Reviewers and from some eminent men of letters.

“NORWOOD,” NOVEMBER, 1897.

Cleo. What shall we do, Enobarbus?

Eno. Think, and die.

Antony and Cleopatra.

AT THE GATES OF SONG

THE SOVEREIGNS

THEY who create rob death of half its stings;
They from the dim inane and vague opaque
Of nothingness, build with their thought, and make
Enduring entities and beauteous things;
They are the Poets—they give airy wings
To shapes marmorean; or they overtake
The Ideal with the brush, or, soaring, wake
Far in the rolling clouds their glorious strings.
The Poet is the only potentate;
His sceptre reaches o'er remotest zones;
His thought remembered and his golden tones
Shall, in the ears of nations uncreate,
Roll on for ages and reverberate
When Kings are dust beside forgotten thrones.

TO THE MILKWEED

NONE call thee flower! I will not so malign
The satin softness of thy pluméd seed,
Nor so profane thee as to call thee weed,
Thou tuft of érmine down, fit to entwine
About a queen; or, fitter still, to line
The nest of birds of strange exotic breed.
The orient cunning, and the somnolent speed
Of looms of dusky Ind weave not so fine
A gossamer Ah me! could he who sings,
On such adventurous and aerial wings
Far over lands and undiscovered seas
Waft the dark seeds of his imaginings,
That, flowering, men might say, Lo! look on these
Wild Weeds of Song—not all ungracious things!

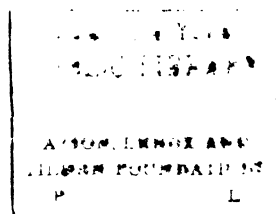
THE DOORS

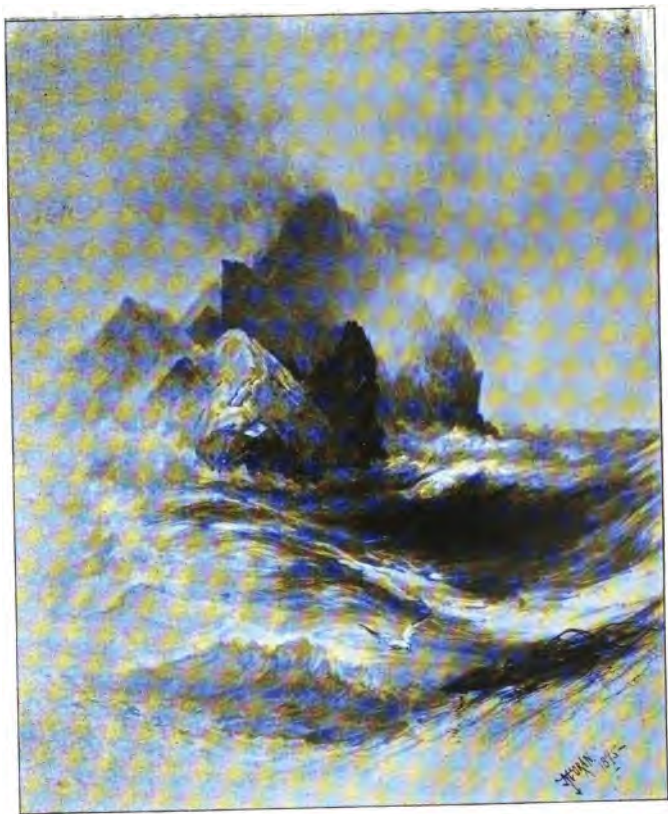
AS through the Void we went I heard his plumes
Strike on the darkness. It was passing sweet
To hold his hand and feel that thin air beat
Against our pinions as we winged those glooms
Of Ebon, through which Atropos still dooms
Each soul to pass. Then presently our feet
Found footing on a ledge of dark retreat,
And opposite appeared two doors of tombs
Seen by the star upon the angel's head
That made dim twilight; there I caught my breath:
"Why pause we here?" The angel answering said,
"The journey ends. These are the Doors of Death;
Lo, now they open, inward, for the dead."
And then a Voice,—“Who next that entereth?”

THEY COME AT EVENING

TO S. F. H.

THINK not because upon these slopes of green
Thou hear'st no footsteps follow, that alone
I pace these vales, and on these crags of stone
At set of sun, or in the twilight's sheen
Walk by myself. Round me at times convene
Shadows and Shades, that from their airy zone
Stand with me here upon this mountain throne
And solace with low voices not terrene.
They come at evening as an avatar :
Great ones with laureled brows, and glorious eyes
Bright with fulfillment of their prophecies ;
With voices like the voices of a star :
Some hover near,—and others—faint, afar,
Pace the horizon in the twilight skies.





"Bird of the dim illimitable seas."

THE STORMY PETREL

TO G. B. M.

ONWARD forever by thy spirit borne
Bird of the dim illimitable seas!
Winging wild gulfs of water at thine ease
When all the surging waves with winds are torn;
Thou for the shore hast never-ending scorn,
And with thy brave heart to the howling breeze
Trustest thy life and all thy destinies.
O wanderer of lone waters half forlorn,
By that dark demon, too, thou art possessed
That drives thee through the storm at any cost—
Bird of the wave! my soul, as thine, is crossed
By the same spirit of undying quest—
Far on the shoreless ocean of unrest
Driven forever, and forever tossed!

MY CASTLE

HOW pale! how faint! how phantom-like it seems,
That vague and vaporous Castle, dimly bright!
From cloudy battlements burst on the sight
Ethereal valleys and innumerable streams.
Inside, a golden-vaulted gallery gleams
With troops of luminous spirits which alight
When Day drops down the drawbridge for the Night.
It is the airy castle of my dreams.
From shadowy turrets dim my soul commands
The spirit of the cloud; nightly I mark
The path of stars. Ah! no assaulting bands—
No hounds of Care swarm at the gate and bark;
And when Sleep comes, the wingéd Warden's hands
Let fall the still portcullis of the dark.

A TUSCAN LACHRYMATORY

THY sweet brow low above thy lover bends—

For he is dead—thou loveliest of all maids
That lived and loved in glad Etrurian glades
Where Vallombrosa now her vale extends.

To thee no comfort from the sky descends;
Thy fingers ringed with jasper and with jades,
Clasp this small' vase of sorrow. In the shades
Cold lies thy love, and so for thee, all ends.

Thou weep'st, and dost endure grief such as sears
The soul. No solace for thy heart in years
To come.

Dead Tuscan by the Umbrian sea !

Thou who art dust this many a century,
What lover shall I leave to weep for me—
What wan amphora filled with woman's tears?

THE PSALM

TIER upon tier of seraphim, bedight
With most excessive glory ; not alone
In golden voids of Heaven, but near the throne
Triumphant with flamboyant wings upright ;
Peal upon peal of song, that took its flight
O'er walls of sardonyx and jasper stone,
Of such enrapturing sweetness as was known
Never to me who came from earth's dark night ;
So did they sing ; so ever did they choir ;
Yet I who listened still am found unmeet
One strain of that wild rapture to repeat
Though all of Heav'n seemed turned into one lyre....
Prostrate I fell before their burning feet—
Prostrate before their flaming wings of fire.

THE OBELISK

IN NEW YORK

THOU look'st in vain for Egypt's mystic strand;
The holy ibis never comes anear,
Nor bannered Bedouins in their spangled gear;
No long-drawn caravan across the sand,
With camels carrying silks of Samarkand;
No dancing girls with anklets tinkling clear,
Nor troop, nor scymetar, nor pluméd spear—
There is no revelry within the land.
Beside our meagre gayety and gold
Thou must, remembering, feel a pang, and sigh
For that imperial splendor near thee rolled—
That purple pomp Egyptian, long gone by—
Thou scornful Alien! sphinx-like in our sky,
Based on thy mystic symbols, as of old.

DISILLUSIONED

WHERE have the power and the splendor flown?
Where have the promises of morning sped?
Ambition where?—her gonfalon outspread
Flaunting the spacious sky of youth alone,
Making the neck of circumstance a stone
Whereon to mount, with high and haughty tread,
Up the sheer steeps to her imperial throne.
Those starry aspirations—are they dead?
Were they but as the mirage, then, that loomed
Across the desert of our days, unknown,
Uncomprehended? and have they consumed
The pith of youth for naught? Will these atone—
These hopes deferred—for visions long entombed?
And is this all that life can give—a moan?

ABOVE THE ABYSM

O N either side black beetling peaks rose sheer,
And blackness filled the gorge forevermore ;
Down in the bottomless chasm a deafning roar
Of seething foam. From cliff to cliff austere,
Across the abysm, as thin as gossamer
Was stretched a cord from perilous shore to shore ;
To this a man clung where no bird could soar,
While the thin thread sagged low, his weight to bear.
In that unfooted region who could aid ?
Across the darkness there I heard no cry
But still his vague form, dimly, could descry
Where, with tense hands, he held, and swayed ... and ...
...swayed ;
I sickened at the sight, and for him prayed ;
Nor knew, until he fell, this man was I.

IF THOU WOULDST COME

THAT day He stilled the tempest, and on land
Drave out the spirits. He was filled with power
And pity. Jairus said, O Lord, my flower—
My rose—my daughter dies; do Thou demand
She live, and it shall be. One there at hand
Spake out, She is already dead. . . . That hour
Across the plain, by minaret and tower
He came,—and she arose at His command.

Were I to be within earth's darksome deeps
A thousand years, commingled with the clay,
I should not feel to-night as one who weeps
If I could know that in that distant day
Thou'dst come, dear Lord, and take my hand, and say,
Awake, arise! He is not dead but sleeps.

AH, TELL ME NOT

AH, TELL me not that passionate words of mine
Shall vanish from the world and pass away;
That these strong dreams which haunt me night and
day
Wrought into song, shall with my sun decline.
Shall not some poet, pacing by the brine,
Repeat these words to keep them from decay?
Or but a tone of one elusive lay
That I have sung, deep in his heart enshrine?—
Some lover, who to-day is yet unborn,
Wandering about the reaches of the sea,
Sick of the world, and filled with softened scorn,—
Shall he not read one line and think of me
And softly say, What hidden grief had he—
This Poet dead—whose soul was so forlorn?

EURYDICE

THE eve was quiet, with no airs to fan
The silent rushes round the milk-white knees
Of the lone naiad; nor the faintest breeze
To stir still pools. There, on the marge, began
The print of sandals faint that onward ran—
These love lorn foot-marks were Eurydice's.
She listened, as within the Cyclades,
One listens for the sea cerulean.
Pale clouds lay on the stream and turned to red.
A fear came to her, and her quick pulse beat.
The heart of silence ached so that it bled.
When through the laurel—hot, pursuing, fleet—
Rushed Aristæus, and she turned and fled,
Nor heard the hissing adder at her feet.

THE SILENCE AFTER ORPHEUS' DEATH

IT was the sweetest silence ever fell
Upon the ear of earth. Not the profound
Dark deeps of air which tremble and resound
When seraphim have ceased; nor far-off swell
Of seas that break on shores of asphodel
And leave a stillness panting all around
With the remembered music of the sound;
Not when some far and spiritual bell
Tolled in the memory, ceases; nor when a star
Has throbbd itself to darkness in the sky
Leaving a void softer than voices are,—
Not these were sweet as silence with her sigh
Around the head of Orpheus, floating far,
When Bacchic revellers stopped his melody.

THE LAST SONG OF ORPHEUS

THAT silence ceased; and on the golden shore
The Thracian women, sanguine-handed, heard
Song from the River sweeter than the bird
That takes the night with rapture, or, of yore,
Orpheus himself had sung. And more and more
It grew, and gathered to one lucent word,
So piteous-sweet, no pen could e'er record
Such honeyed sound as then began to soar.
The satyr pricked his goat-ears, wonderingly,
And dropped, atween his hoofs, his pipe of oat.
Bird, fish, and grove, moved to the melody
For the last time. On Hebrus, far afloat,
The soul of Orpheus, in one dulcet note
Passed, as his dead lips sang, Eu-ryd-i-ce!
Till listening mermaids i' the Ægean sea
Drew down the head, and sang with silver throat,
On rocks, and in sea caves, the self-same note,—
Eu-ryd-i-ce! Eu-ryd-i-ce!

BUILD THOU THY TEMPLES

REWARD lies in the work, not in the eye
Nor voice of critic. Whether on the mart,
Or on the Heliconian hills apart,
Toil at thy temples builded in the sky.
Dreams are in sooth, the only verity.
The world with scorn may lacerate thy heart—
Insult with praise too late....Delve at thine Art:
Beauty shall never unremembered die.

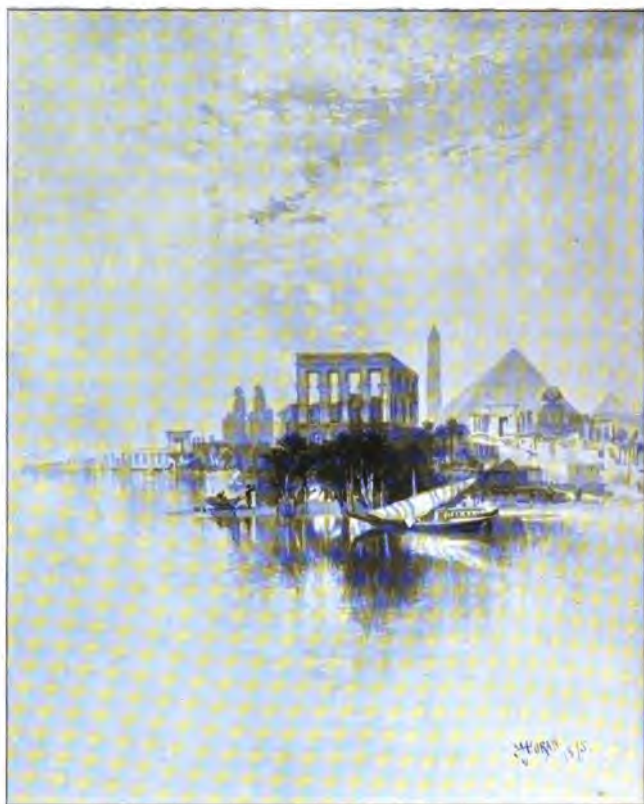
The sculptor, unillustrious and alone,
Pent in the still reclusion of his room,
Carves, through the vexed vicissitude of years
Some marvel in Carrara, but the stone
Men heed not till it stand above his tomb—
The cold commemoration of his tears.

EROS

'NEATH yonder moon-lit archways, like the Moors',
Luscious of limb, and languorously dull,
Balefully sweet and darkly beautiful,
The Nautch girls, o'er the tessellated floors,
Come tinkling down the distant corridors
With somnolent sounds that soon all cares annul,
Leaving the listener, dreamy, in the glooms,
Lapped in the sensuousness of Circe's shores :
'Mid scents of sandal-wood and strange perfumès,
One hardly hears the nightingale, that pours
Her soul out by the fountain where she soars ;
The air is love-oppressed ; Love's very plumes
Pulse with the passion that his life consumes—
Where clambering roses close the curtained doors.

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"Kingdoms in ashes, past them all she flows."

NILUS

MEN say her source is in wild mountain glooms,
But where—even the dark Sphinx never knows!
Kingdoms in ashes, past them all she flows,
And dust of monarchs and swart queens she dooms
To lie along her sands. She laves the tombs
Of tyrants long forgotten, even those
Who built their dais on her nation's woes,
And in her people's heart blood dipped their plumes.
And still she strews her banks with human bones;
Her wave is crimsoned with the cruel things
Done by her despots; on her shores the groans
Of millions. . . . Hearken! as she sings
The decimation of the tyrant thrones,
The fate of Empire, and the dirge of Kings!

EVENTIDE

STILL does Apollo down the scarlet ways
Of sunset glory charioteer his team,
Where the long lessening lanes of crimson gleam
Athwart the solemn rifts of gathering grays.
Within a molten sea of chrysoprase
Dim temporal domes arise as in a dream ;
While toward the zenith, over all, supreme,
Torn shreds of splendor float within the blaze.
Dark grow the islands as the sinking beam
Deserts each crag and sombre-wooded scar ;
From o'er th' empurpled gravel of the bar,
Faint to us comes the lonely bittern's scream ;
While on the darkening mirror of the stream
Falls the effulgence of the evening star.

THE QUESTION

WITH folded wings we paced the gorge alone,
The shining nimbus round the angel there
Lighted my feet. Black in the zenith air,
Rose th' immeasurable mountain throne
Peak above peak of everlasting stone:—
“What is Eternity? O Guide, declare!”
“Conceive,” said he, “an angel flying where
Rises aloft yon peak’s Cimmerian cone,
And that his pinion’s soft extremity
Should brush those walls of adamant, and wear
One grain away; then, every thousandth year
Again his wing should touch it, flying by,
Till all the cliff, at last, should disappear—
Then only would begin Eternity!”

THE SEA

THE plunging, dark-maned Sea bellows and gores
Like some infuriated buffalo band
That sweeps headlong, and devastates the land!
A hungry creature round the world she roars;
Her maw is ravenous as the Minotaurs'.
In the deep cemetery of her sand
Rolls the smooth skull, and rests the mariner's hand.
The Kraken sleeps, portentous, on her floors.
She lifts vast voices. In her awful glooms
Roar the deep thunders of eternity.
Her soul is as a vortex, and she fumes
Restless as mortal man. Doth she foresee
The Seal of Doom is on her as she booms
In monstrous caverns, everlastingly?

SESOSTRIS

SOLE Lord of Lords and very King of Kings,
He sits within the desert, carved in stone;
Inscrutable, colossal, and alone,
And ancients than memory of things.
Graved on his front the sacred beetle clings;
Disdain sits on his lips; and in a frown
Scorn lives upon his forehead for a crown.
The affrighted ostrich dare not dust her wings
Anear this Presence. The long caravan's
Dazed camels stop, and mute the Bedouins stare.
This symbol of past power more than man's
Presages doom. Kings look—and Kings despair:
Their sceptres tremble in their jewelled hands
And dark thrones totter in the baleful air!

LIKE BELLS UNTOLLED

SWEET are the songs the soul still leaves unsung !
How could the spirit dare to set in speech
The poignant love that lies beyond the reach
And utmost eloquence of human tongue
Upon the shores of Silence, heaped among
Those splendid jewels of the soul that each
Snatches and hides forever on the beach
Of Life from Love's great tidal-wave upflung !

O lips that smile, and eyes that shed no tears,
What pangs ye suffer in your bosom's hell !
O hearts that keep a silence, all your years,
Though breaking with a love ye will not tell,
Your sob dies with you, like an untolled bell,—
Or if at last ye speak, 'tis Death who hears !

TITHONUS

SO long ago that I forget the day
This agony of immortality
I begged for, came, which she could not foresee.
Dazed by her beauty, I, in my dismay,
Forgot to ask for Youth; and here I lay
Dim-sighted, loveless, chill, and doomed to be
Agéd forever. Through eternity
Worlds may be born at will, but I must stay
Cold in these clouds, who beauteous was, and drew
Eös to love me every rosy morn.
Her sandals touch the hill-tops wet with dew—
Divine she comes! O Sweet! I am forlorn—
Forlorn, and old—too old for love, and you!
Grant me, at last to die, ere Day be born.

THE GRASSHOPPER TO AURORA

O DAWN! was this my punishment condign?
How long it is since thou upon me beamed!
That thou wouldst change me thus I never dreamed,
Who am become a voice, and here repine
Unknown to all, except to thee, divine.
Rechange!—return me to thyself, though seamed
With eld, to see thy chariot, radiant-teamed
Come up the slopes of morning from the brine!
Let me return to thee though I be old!
Without thee, O Beloved! here I pine
Ages within the grass. 'Tis I,—behold!
Who had a body beauteous e'en as thine;
Lift me above; and thou once more be mine
Far in the bosom of thy clouds of gold!

FAR FROM THE CROWD

THE upland winds are blowing loud and shrill;
Above this hollow lone, I hear them rave
'Mong autumn grasses o'er the summer's grave;
The silent cypresses that fringe the hill
Bend 'neath the fury of their angry will.
Down here, this limpid pool beside the cave
Lies all unruffled by the wind or wave,
And holds the blue of heaven calm and still.

Then let her trump blare round them on their peak,
They who, by blatant Fame, enthronéd are;
But I will make my soul a pool, and seek
The sheltering hollows of the hills afar;
Then through the days, it may of heaven speak,
And through the nights, perchance, reflect a star.

AFTER READING SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

I SAID that I would make my soul a pool
And set it in the hollows of the hills
Far from the turbulence of the love that kills,
Far from blind passion that makes man a fool,—
For he lacks wisdom, who, with mad misrule
Vexes his lake of life with Love's wild ills;
Still let him hide his heart where dew distills
Sweet influence round him, ever calm and cool.

To-night I read of Shakespeare's agony—
The hell he walked through in the pangs of love;
And I remembered others that Love drove
Through fiery furnaces of ecstasy;
But Poets should sit raised such blasts above
Throned in that fine air of Tranquillity.

TO SHAKESPEARE

ON READING HIS SONNETS

I WILL not do thy memory the wrong
To quite believe that thou didst write these things.
Could The Sweet Swan of Avon soil his wings
With the green scum of these dark pools of song
Whose currents crawl that doubtful land along—
By newt, and jewelled toad, and snake that clings,—
Through dank and rotting marshes, where upsprings
Seldom a lily—all those weeds among?
Words of great Poets, pure as peaks of snow,
Should stand up through the ages. That hot strife
'Tween flesh and soul should still unwritten go.
Can we believe that thou with evil rife,
Wast slave of grov'ling passions, dark and low?—
Thou! in the mire and on the heights of life!

LOST ISLES

'T WAS long ago we roamed a summer sea,
With pictured sails that fanned the perfumed air;
Far o'er the waters, yet we knew not where;
Sudden an isle, dim as a memory,
Called like a siren to us, until we
Lay in her bosom an hour, at anchor there
We sailed afar; then searched in sheer despair,
But nevermore we found where it could be!

O lips of those who loved us, lightly pressed,
Where are ye now, since life is growing gray?
Hands laid in ours; dear faces once caressed
And left forever; and some tender breast
Where we were anchored, by sweet Love, a day—
Lost Isles are these from which we sailed away.

ON LONDON BRIDGE

SUNSET

A LEGION, girt with angry thunder, fills
The crimsoned West, and wings of spirits in pain
Wave where the sun, as in some lost domain,
Incarnadines the clouds like one who kills
And on his track the victim's life-blood spills.
The city's crime flaunts on the air its stain,
As demons blurred the sky the while Lot's train
Left Sodom and Gomorrah for the hills.

Angels of Peace, not here may ye abide !
Amid this undistinguishable din
And roar of peoples, still from side to side
Moves the new wave of faces, flushed, or thin,
That carries, on its dark Babelian tide,
The ineradicable stain of sin.

A PICTURE OF MY MOTHER

UPON this old Daguerreotype appears
Thy face, my Mother, crowned with wondrous hair.
What reconciliation in thine air;
And what a saintly smile, as if thy fears
The Lord had taken from thee, and thy tears!
'Tis my delight to still believe thee fair;
And thou wast loved, I know, for often here,
I saw my Father's eyes, at eighty years,
O'erflow with love whene'er we spoke of thee—
We spoke of thee, I said, not he—not he!—
He could not speak! . . . O peace be with thee, then,
Madonna-like, thy babe upon thy knee!
My gentle Mother, lost on earth to me,
Shall I not know thee somewhere once again?

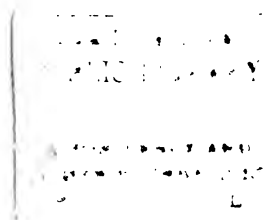
FORGETFULNESS



THE eagles of incessant thought still prey
Upon me here ; so, as Prometheus stood
Chained in the Caucasus, there in his blood
The eternal vulture gnawed. Great thoughts were they
Taloned and winged, that tore him night and day....
Those who, high on the peak and solitude
Of being, live i' the mind,—they are the food
For death, the harpy. Thought is malady;
And death itself may not that evil cure.
'Tis weariness to think of thinking on
Through aeons of that dim dominion
Of after-life.... Me thou dost still allure
To seek thy shores—O thou divine, obscure,
Un-thoughted Lethe of Oblivion !

THE THRESHING FLOOR

OFT may you see within some barn's wide door,
In winter, underneath the snowy eaves,
The great floor covered thick with summer's sheaves,
And moving horses, tethered four and four,
Tramping in endless circles, o'er and o'er,—
A seeming bootless task, as one believes,
Yet at the end, when day her sickle sheathes,
Behold! the yellow wheat upon the floor.
My soul, be thou contented, and full fain,
Though yearning for the boundless prairies sweet,
Trudge round life's circles still, with willing feet;
And from the sheaves of trial and of pain,
By patience strong, and by endurance meet,
Tramp out, ere evening comes, the golden grain!





"Through vasts unwinnowed by the wings of eld."

FIAT LUX

TO B.

THEN that dread angel near the awful throne
Leaving the seraphs ranged in flaming tiers,
Winged his dark way through those unpinioned
spheres,
And on the void's black beetling edge, alone,
Stood with raised wings, and listened for the tone
Of God's command to reach his eager ears,
While Chaos wavered, for she felt her years
Unsceptered now in that convulsive zone.
Night trembled. And, as one hath oft beheld
A lamp lit in a vase light up its gloom,
So God's voice lighted him, from heel to plume,
Let there be Light It said, and Darkness, quelled,
Shrunk noiseless backward in her monstrous womb
Through vasts unwinnowed by the wings of eld!

TRANSMUTATION

SOUTHWARD from India's spired citadel
Where all the Orient wafts her odorous breeze
Along the reaches of Ceylonian seas
Above her reefs of coral,—there doth dwell
A jewel-making mollusk. In its shell
When atoms enter, then, the pain to ease,
Slowly it coats with nacre, each of these,
Producing pearls that scarce have parallel.

Ah, me! all suffering and all ecstasies
Of grief—which to the Singer still belong—
Heart-lacerations and the vortex-swirls
Of passion, are by him, through agonies
Of spirit, turned at length to lyric pearls—
Transmuted by the alchemy of song.

NOW LIKE A RED LEAF

IN youth how slowly passed the golden day!
As if upon the stillness of some brook
You threw a rose leaf and the rose leaf took
Its own sweet time to loiter to the bay;
The lark sang always; life was endless play;
We lived on nectar from a poet's book,
Drifting along by many a sunny nook,
Little we cared—it would be ever May!....
Now, like a red leaf on the autumnal stream,
That cannot steer nor stop—that cannot sink—
Swiftly I drift. As in some fateful dream
There seems no time to pause—no time to think;
The cataract roars—I see the white foam gleam
Within the gorge—it draws me to the brink!

MILTON

HIS feet were shod with music and had wings
Like Hermes: far upon the peaks of song
His sandals sounded silverly along;
The dull world blossomed into beauteous things
Where'er he trod; and Heliconian springs
Gushed from the rocks he touched; round him a throng
Of fair invisibles, seraphic, strong,
Struck Orphean murmurs out of golden strings;
But he, spreading keen pinions for a white
Immensity of radiance and of peace,
Up-looming to the Æmpean infinite,
Far through ethereal fields, and zenith seas,
High, with strong wing-beats and with eagle ease,
Soared in a solitude of glorious light!

PRODIGALS

AS some crazed king upon a wild sea shore
Takes from his chests his hoard of hidden gold,
His crown, his sceptre, and his gems untold,
With all the royal orders which he wore,
And hurls them, one by one, into the roar
And hunger of the sea; and then, when old,
Comes to his senses, shivers in the cold,
And mourns his kingdom's treasures evermore;
So we, unwitting of the wealth of years,
Here by life's ocean fling away our gems—
Sceptres of youth, and manhood's diadems;
Like fools we waste them with no future fears;
Reason returns, and us too late condemns—
The beggared monarchs of a realm of tears!

TO A MAPLE SEED

TO E. H. M.

ART thou some wingéd Sprite, that fluttering round,
Exhausted on the grass at last doth lie,
Or wayward Fay? Ah, weakling, by and by,
Thyself shalt grow a giant, strong and sound,
When, like Antaeus, thou dost touch the ground.
O happy Seed! it is not thine to die;
Thy wings bestow thine immortality,
And thou canst bridge the deep and dark profound.
I hear the ecstatic song the wild bird flings,
In future summers, from thy leafy head!
What hopes! what fears! what rapturous sufferings!
What burning words of love will there be said!
What sobs—what tears! what passionate whisperings
Under thy boughs, when I, alas! am dead.

SCORN FOR MYSELF I FEEL

WHENE'ER I think what some rare souls have done,
Who drank the dregs of dire adversity;
Who, on th' Ixion wheel of penury,
Sang while they starved, as starry Chatterton;
Whose pens were dipped in heart's blood— every one;
Who died in dungeons singing liberty;
Scorn for myself I feel, who being free,
Held but my farthing candle to the sun.
With organ-pealings deep and reaching far,
Like Bards long dead, I should have spoken loud;
They, from the top of their Olympian cloud,
Flung jewelled harmonies oracular,
That on the forehead of the centuries proud
Live on forever—deathless as a star!

IN AFTER DAYS

AH, yes! in those immemorable days—
Not so far distant but I see the rim
Of their horizon looming—then of him
It shall be said, who writes these roundelay,
“Lo, he is gone—gone down Death’s darksome ways.”
But when they ope his heart, love’s paradigm
Shall meet their look, and hardened eyesshall swim—
A name graved there, shall dash them with amaze.

So it befalls some traveler in that zone
That followed on the age Silurian,
Who, with a mere incurious interest stirred,
Breaks, carelessly, some road-side rock in twain,
And startled, finds the footmarks of a bird
Imperishably printed in the stone.

LADRO

I AM that sacrilegious one, the same
Whose lie beheaded Nona; erewhile seen
By him, that tattling scribbler Florentine,
Ages ago in Hell; and lest foul fame
Of me should fade, Albano lately came,
And carved in stone—like life itself, I ween,
Me, the base church thief, tied with snakes unclean,
A marble perpetuity of shame!
Art's immortality of infamy
Now coats me ever as this viper slime. . . .
Accursed be the sculptor! and may I
Burn this Carrara, kiln-like, into lime—
Fang'd as I am to death, unendingly,
By knots of venom'd serpents, for my crime!

TO THE SCULPTOR OF LADRO

ALBANO, one is glad who once more sees
A work of genius in this age, in stone;
Virile, consummate, masterful, alone
Amid a world of white inanities,—
For this is worthy golden days of Greece.
No lathe-turned limbs, the work of jours, has won
This eminence—such quivering flesh and bone—
Ay, this Praxiteles himself would please.
And yet we cavil—cavil at the theme!
The Mediæval, surely is effete.
Peer deep into the soul—the soul we deem
Poetic still, if Dante's obsolete;
Idealize To-day, then carve your Dream,
Your ear held closer to Life's red heart-beat!

STORM-SWEPT

FAIR faces mild with calm serenity ;
The placid brows Madonna might have worn ;
Clear foreheads where no cares were ever born—
These are the gauds of Youth's vacuity.
Not so the fronts of those who live and die
Scarred with the thunder-track of Thought and torn
With eagle beaks of Art, who bear the thorn
Of Passion in their souls, eternally.
Behold the infinite pathos of their eyes !
Each face is as the sorrow which it knows—
Gashed as the shield of Hector, but with blows
Immortal of the mind that agonize.
And if a calm e'er settle on such brows,
'Twill be in Lethe where no thoughts arise.

AT THE POINT OF DEATH

COME nearer, my Beloved, it is night;
Bend down above my bed thy features mild,
No wife have I to love, nor tender child.
Thou wert mine angel. Wilt thou take thy flight—
Thou! with thine eyes of pity infinite—
And leave me dying and unreconciled?
It was the sweetness of thy lips beguiled
Life of its pang and made the darkness bright.
Oh! lean down nearer—nearer! Do not fly!
Have we not loved each other well and long?
Leave me not now, my heart!—my soul!—my song!—
Beloved Poësy! to thee I cry
Wrap thy dear arms around me—hold me strong!
Oh! wake me with thy kisses when I die!

A PASSING SHIP

HOW beauteous with her full sails to the breeze
As slow she bends and rocks above the bay!
She will not come anear us; she will stray
Onward within the West. Mark, how she flees
Along the sunset splendor of the seas!
Comes she from silken Fez or dusk Cathay,
With scents of sandal-wood that round her play
In all her sails? or brings she fragrant teas,
Or pungent bales of Ceylon's cinnamon?
She sails and sails! But whither will she
steer?
It seems to one who waits and watches here
As if between the crimson clouds she'd run
Deep down those glowing portals, golden-clear,
And cast her anchors in the flaming sun.

PROMETHEUS CHAINED

A H, no!—not tears held back, nor wail, nor shriek,
Tempestuous anger, nor delirious groan;
Nor longings, unimagined and unknown;
Nor the red javelin of the vulture's beak,—
Not these shall make th' indomitable meek!
I stand against the gods for man alone.
This bed of torture shall become a throne;
These chains, O Jove, shall consecrate this peak.
Nay, shouldst thou slide the multitudinous sands
Of Libya through an hour-glass in thy hands
To time the future of my doom forlorn,
Yield would I not! Thy tortures have I borne,
Thy vultures, thunders, lightnings, and commands,
Yet thee I still defy—defy and scorn!

THE FLIGHT

UPON a cloud among the stars we stood.
The angel raised his hand and looked and said,
"Which world, of all yon starry myriad
Shall we make wing to?" The still solitude
Became a harp whereon his voice and mood
Made spherical music round his haloed head.
I spake—for then I had not long been dead—
"Let me look round upon the vasts, and brood
A moment on these orbs ere I decide....
What is yon lower star that beauteous shines
And with soft splendor now incarnadines
Our wings?—*There* would I go and there abide."
He smiled as one who some child's thought divines:
"That is the world where yesternight you died."

THESEUS AND ARIADNE

AT NAXOS

Thes. **N**AY, I have loved thee!

Ari. Thou hast loved, didst say?

Thes. I loved thee well at Crete.

Ari. Lov'st me no more?

Thes. Ah! who can hold the wave upon the shore?

Ari. Thou, if thou wouldst; and oh! is that the way
Thou speak'st to me, who gave thee, on that day,
My flower of life?

Thes. My ship is ready—sail and oar! . . .

Ari. Did I not save thee from the Minotaur,—
And wilt thou leave me?

Thes. Who can make love stay? . . .

Wax is my heart and takes full easily

The last print on't. Past love is past recall.

Adieu! . . . Love has the helm—he guides—not we . . .

Ari. Belovéd Traitor! May thy black sail pall
Deep in the brine, thee, and thy maidens all! . . .
Ye gods! he leaves me and my babe to be!

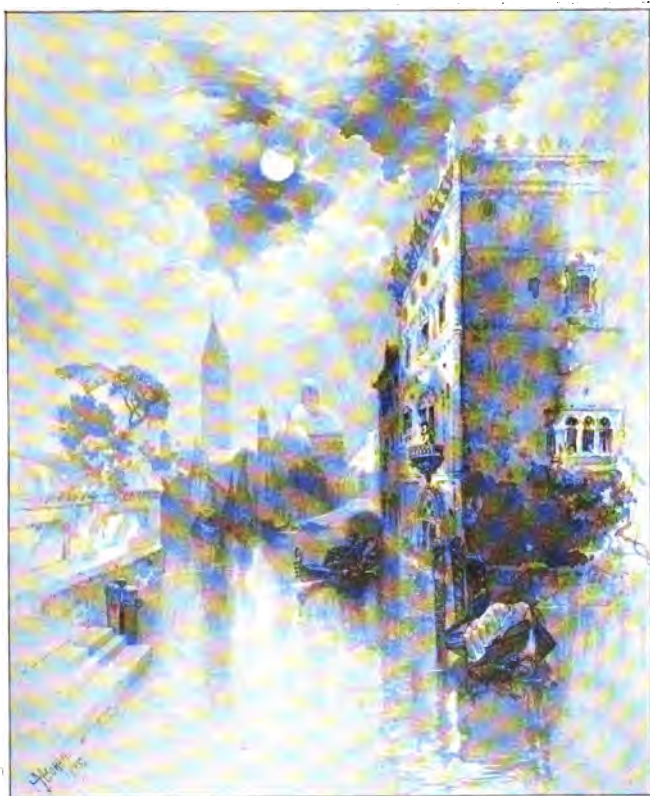
THESE THINGS I SAW

I WANDERED on through those mysterious deeps ;
I stood on beetling cliffs that loomed sublime
Above vast valleys, where for countless time
Gathers fertility which useless sleeps
Where never, through the soil, one flower peeps ;
Grottoes and caves there were, with emerald slime,
Through which strange Things did ever crawl, and
climb,
Near the great Monster that in coils still keeps
Listening forever for the trump's commands ;
Lovers there were, clasped with convulsive hands ;
Jewels, and crowns, and sceptres ; precious stones
Rolled in the eyes of skulls ; and whitened bones
Forever shifting over shifting sands :
These things I saw within the sea's dim zones.

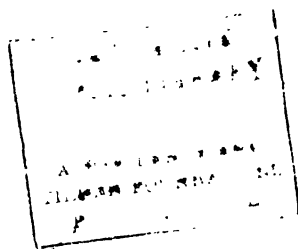
TO AN OLD VENETIAN WINE GLASS

ROSE-COLORED AT THE BRIM

DAUGHTER of Venice, fairer than the moon !
From thy dark casement leaning, half divine,
And to the lutes of love that low repine
Across the midnight of the hushed lagoon
Listening with languor in a dreamful swoon—
On such a night as this thou didst entwine
Thy lily fingers round this glass of wine,
And clasped thy climbing lover—none too soon !
Thy lover left, but ere he left thy room
From this he drank, his warm lips at the brim ;
Thou kissed it as he vanished in the gloom ;
That kiss, because of thy true love for him—
Long, long ago when thou wast in thy bloom—
Hath left it ever rosy round the rim !



"Across the midnight of the hushed lagoon."



THE VISION

ONE side the beetling ridge of heated stone
The fiery chasm lay, where flaming seas
And tongues of fire, and awful agonies,
Sobs, shrieks and wails, and many a hopeless groan,
Rose wild around me as I stood alone.....
I looked above, and under summer trees
Saw troops of spirits strolling at their ease,
Who harping ever, never knew a moan,
But filled the rosy air with ecstasies
Of song. "And who are those that never cease
To sing? who they that by the flames are blown?"
"Those are the spirits who have championed Peace;
The souls that gloried in red War are these.
Lo, God is just—they reap as they have sown!"

THE EVENING VOICE

OFT have I seen o'er some gray orchard wall
The solemn cattle in the evening sun,
Awake, and slowly rising, one by one
Hearing from home the master's welcome call
Follow the winding pathway, great and small,
Nor wander from it till the barn was won;
Then quench each parchéd throat within the run,
And through the night sleep safe within the stall:—
E'en so would I, now in this lessening light,
Hearing a voice that calls me o'er the hills,
Rise and walk onward, with no fear of ills
Threading the dim path homeward, as I might,
Then, drinking deeply from immortal rills,
Rest in the folds of Peace throughout the Night.

THE APOSTATE SAINT

MIDWAY upon a precipice I prayed,
And gave my soul to God—ages ago.
To me, up from a seething chasm below,
A seeming Angel came, and on me laid
His hand. “Mount higher up with me,” he said.
A day and night we clomb those heights of woe
And stood anear the stars. How could I know
His purpose? Round him then he cast a shade.
I quailed; and then he spake, “I am the Prince
Of Darkness. Worship me; be thou my thrall.”
The Coward in me conquered—made me wince
And yield. “Traitor!” he hissed; and o’er that wall
Me in th’ abysm hurled. I fell, through all
That Void,—and falling . . . fall, forever, since.

THE OCEAN ISLE

ITS cliffs are peaks,—ten thousand feet on high,
Sheer from the sea, they tower above the mist;
Each sunrise smites them gold and amethyst;
And there the noon clouds pause as they go by.
It looms a vision of the wave and sky.
From upland valleys, which the Dawn has kissed,
Vague waterfalls come streaming where they list,
And lose themselves in falling, dreamily.
Unutterably blue and vast, it seems
Some region rising from the sea serene.
Across the years the phantom waves of green
Boom at its base above the petrel's screams;
But by none else hath it been ever seen—
Only by me—and only in my dreams!

ANTONY TO CLEOPATRA

AFTER THE BATTLE AT SEA

HATH this mine arm lost valor, and mine eye
Its penetrant power? And will no smile
Leap to thy lips, my Lotus of the Nile,
To greet my coming, now that victory
Sits on the helmets of our enemy?
Who nobly die, must nobly live the while;—
Ah! there I lapsed through love, but not through
guile—
And now portentous phantoms fill the sky.

The day is past—defeat, and all its ills. . . .
O let me lean this head upon thy breast,
As on the gentle shoulder of the hills
The gray and fading clouds of evening rest—
Vanquished, my Queen! not by War's pluméd crest,
But by thy conquering kisses fatal thrills.

THESE WASTE THE SPIRIT



LIKE to a pebble lying on the shore,
So is our life that for a space abides;
The dominant sea o'errules us and o'errides,
Wearing each day a little from our store.
We rest supine; we listen to the roar,
And bear the slow abrasion of the tides;
And still with its irrevocable strides,
Tramples the sea upon us evermore.
Th' unending friction of the night and day;
And e'en the slow corrosion of our glee;
The thunderous breakers capped with agony—
These waste the spirit, as they sap the clay,
Until at last we're slowly worn away,
Gulfed in the surges of the ceaseless sea.

THE END OF EREBUS

AS on the cliff's Cimmerian ridge I bent,
Precipitously steep, below me far,
Down—down the abysm's perpendicular,
I listened for the rock my feet had sent
Thundering, to strike some bottom ; but it went
Noiseless into the Nadir,—as a star
Darkened by God in anger, from afar
Drops, black, into the gulphs ignipotent.
A voice swept past. The Pit below me brake
Into one crimsoned cauldron, and the glooms,
And all the heated peaks, began to take
The dye of dread vermilion, for the wombs
Of hell belched upward, and I saw the quake
And frantic winnowings of a billion plumes.

BURKE

(1730-1797)

HIS was that golden opulence of phrase—
That sumptuous and impassioned diction splendid,
Upon whose fiery pauses hung suspended
Assembled multitudes in mute amaze.
That great heart still for Freedom was ablaze.
The battery of his eloquence defended
Man and his rights,—too soon that power ended—
He died while in the lustre of his days.

So some great battle-ship magnificent,
Whose cannon, thundering o'er the listening world,
Their still triumphant detonations hurled
In pealing tones of conquest eloquent—
Sinks, suddenly—her royal flags unfurled,
Invincible—with all her armament.

UP WITH THE DRAWBRIDGE

THIS glorious Castle, whose broad base was laid
With our forefathers' blood, whose turrets glow
Yet from our war, is threatened with worse woe:
(While home-foes mine the walls in ambuscade!)
The idle—worthless—pauper—renegade,
Swarm on the moat. Shall Europe—Python foe!
Slough her skin here? Arise! and tell her, No!
This Tower, by sires, for us alone was made!
See! From the steerage, how they scale the wall!
Awake, ye Sentries! 'Tis a Nation's call!
Shall our fair Castle sink to such base hands?
Unload elsewhere the old-world prison vans—
Quick—to the gate!—Let the portcullis fall!
America is for Americans!

THE EMPTY HOUSE

STAND here, I pray you, at this iron gate,
Beyond the house—this gateway grim of stone—
Dear as you are, let me go in alone
Among the ghostly chambers, where await
The sacred Presences, long called by fate
Beyond my touch, but not beyond the zone
Of dear companionship. . . . There is a tone
Of exquisite sadness in these halls sedate,
Unheard but by the heart. In upper rooms
I hear faint foot-falls, silent for long years;
Lost lips bend down anear me. Through the glooms
Loved faces throng the stairway, sweet with tears;
And from the walls, where nothing now appears,
Each dim ancestral portrait looks and looms.

AFRIC

LIKE some nocturnal lily that shall bloom
In centuries hence, we watch thee ; in our dream
See in thy swamps the Prospero of our steam ;
Thy doors unlocked, where knowledge in her tomb,
Hath lain innumerable years in gloom.
Then shalt thou, wakening with that morning's
gleam,
Shine as thy sister lands with equal beam ;
But Indian-like, thy race hath met its doom :
As tidal waves that strike some midnight shore
Rush, and with white irrevocable hands
Sweep clean the coast of all the horde of sands,
So the great waves of Franks that onward pour
Shall sweep thy swart race sheer from off thy lands
To death, and life shall know them there no more.

THE VOICELESS

HE clomb where dreamers ever strive to climb.
Not at life's low unsatisfying lake
He sought insatiable thirst to slake.
With undiminishable faith sublime
He scaled the cliffs of midnight and the prime
Gnawed by the vultures of his thought; nor spake
One word, mute-waiting for some Power to break
The torturing taciturnity of Time.
He stood and trembled with ecstatic thrill,
While through the darkness gleamed his pallid face
Stern with the soul's unconquerable will;
Uplooking to the stars, he listened still
For some apocalyptic Voice to fill
The Vasts of unimaginable space.

TO THE POPPY

✓
ELUSIVE Spirit of the vague inane
Whose keys unlock the cavernous doors of sleep,
Profound and dim, unfathomably deep,—
Thou, with the soft links of thy noiseless chain,
Bindest the frenzied body and the brain.
Soother of anguish for all men that weep!
Angel of mercy, thou dost from them keep
The pangs of torture—the wild throes of pain.
Strange lights thou bringest far beyond the gleams
Of beacons on the peaks of thought, while all
About thy feet move those unending streams
And labyrinthine by-ways past recall;
And 'tween two worlds, 'tis thou that canst let fall
The cloudy drawbridge of daedalian dreams.

THE BOUQUET

AS ONE in late November mid low meads
Tramps to far fields among the uplands set,
And on some fence, as on a parapet
Leans, and looks in on briery wastes, where feeds
The snow-bird, lonely, on the gray grass seeds—
While round, the wraiths of April's violet
And ghosts of pale rath roses bring regret—
Then rambles in among those sombre weeds
'Mid bloomless stalks of many a late wood-rose,
And gleans, from them, one handful of wild things
That when at home some recollection brings
Of Spring. . . . So may he find, who, journeying goes
Through uplands of my Song—where no flow'r blows—
Some faint suggestion of some fairer Springs!

A POET'S GRAVE

WHERE shall I make my grave my soul to please?
In sultry wastes where silent Arabs tread?
Upon the brow of some stark mountain's head,
Or in the lone, illimitable seas?
Or 'neath the umbrage of ancestral trees,
Where I have laughed with loved ones who are dead?
Or on the blue hills where my youth was sped? . . .
O yield me yet some wilder spot than these!
Place me at last, when my brief day is o'er,
And life's scant lamp burns out within my room,—
Place me on high above the Cataract's shore
Amid the mists, the sunshine, and the gloom;
Still hearing, in that immemorial roar,
The thunder of God's presence round my tomb!

THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

(1782-1818)

THE blood of innocence stained thy head of gray,
Thou tool of commerce—thou who didst procure
The Orient's gold by every base allure,
To swell the cormorant maw of birds of prey.
Thou didst from princes wrench their wealth away,
And take the crust from India's suffering poor,—
Thou product of that Christian England pure
Who grinds the faces of her East to-day.
Thou art forever of all honor shorn—
Thou target for the javelins of disgust
And maledictions of the times unborn ;
While all the living, of the good and just,
Heap on the handful of that recreant dust
Their loathings and unmitigated scorn.

ON WRITING CCXL SONNETS

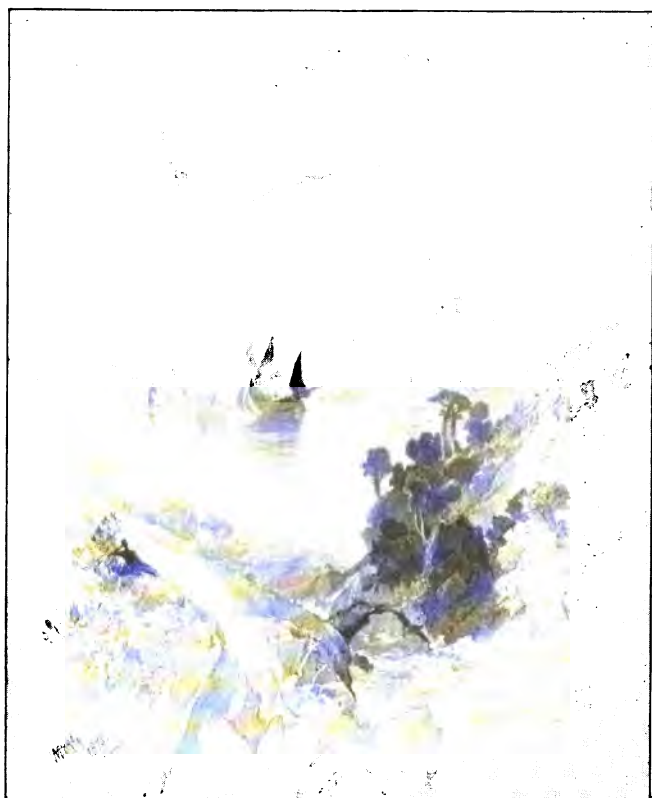
M. J. M.

AH! who would list forever to one choir.
The lark's clear note, the dove's melodious moan,
The sweetest music unto mortal known,
With frequent iteration soon must tire.
Whoso shall lay his hand upon the lyre
For twice a hundred times, as I have done,
Needs must reverberate some earlier tone,
And often strike, alas, the selfsame wire.
So if with jarring notes his harp resounds,
Blame not the struggling Lyrist nor the Muse.
How can the rugged Saxon which we use,
Whose roughness cleaves these lines with ragged
wounds,
Charm as an organ roll of Umbrian sounds
That float from Vallombrosa or Vaucluse?

REMBRANDT VAN RHYN

LOW, avaricious, mean, thou wert, they tell,—
Rembrandt! thy inner life they vilify.
Do thorns grow figs? Can truth spring from a lie?
The tenderness of Dante rather fell
Upon thy sorrowing soul, I know full well,
Else the sad angel looking through the eye
Of those old portraits, thou couldst not descry.
Diviner of the supernatural!
Master of Light, and Colors' crownéd King!
O Painter of the glory and the gloom,
Wizard of luminous dark—of glow—of bloom!
Poet profound, who wore the unseen wing,
Thrower of splendors round the meanest thing,
With thee, thy mantle fell within thy tomb!





"A phantom ship across the sunset strand."

THE SHIP

I LAY on Delos of the Cyclades
At evening, on a cape of golden land;
The blind Bard's book was open in my hand,
There where the Cyclops makes the Odyssey's
Calm pages tremble as Odysseus flees.
Then, stately, like a mirage o'er the sand,
A phantom ship across the sunset strand
Rose out of dreams and clave the purple seas;
Straight on that city's bastions did she run—
Whose toppling turrets on their donjons hold
Bells that to mortal ears have never tolled—
Then drifted down the gateways of the sun
With fading pennon and with gonfalon,
And cast her anchors in the pools of gold.

THE PALE RIDER

AT LAST I felt the ominous, black air, quake
With far-off beatings of their hornèd wings
Before they came—enormous, baleful Things—
Harpy, chimera, scaly wingèd snake
With dugs of witches, roaring in the wake
Of him who furious rode, and held the stings
Of adders in his hand. A million kings
Slain in his path could not his ravin slake.
Onward he plunged, and as he came, I saw
High on his eyeless skull, a crown was wreathed ;
Sceptre he held, and sword he never sheathed ;
Headlong he rushed. Gaunt was his empty maw
Though he devoured the world and all that breathed :
I looked, and fell before him, dead, from awe.

PSAPHO

IN ancient times, 'tis said, this Libyan
Tamed hosts of birds, and, with a deep design,
Taught them to say, "Psapho's a god divine!"
Then turned them loose. And many a caravan,
Halting at wells twixt Cairo and Kairwan,
Hearing the birds, believed in Psapho's line;
While others doubted, and past palm and pine
Smiled on their camels tinkling to Assuan.
There's many a clique within our daily ken
Which drills the voices of its pert Reviews
To utter and re-utter, like cuckoos,
That *they* divine are 'mong the ranks of men;
But as we read, we think of Psapho's ruse—
The Libyan with his birds is back again!

IN MEMORIAM

H. H. H. JR. OBIT. ROME

MDCCLXXIX

THEN died for us more life than often dies ;
The child, the lad, the youth, th' unconscious Prince;
All untamed boyhood's thousand royalties—
These passed with him, nor have they risen since;
His face drew downward from benignant skies
The chiseled beauty of the sculptor's stone ;
And all the luminous dark of Tuscan eyes
Was mirrored there, still lovelier, in his own.
And now, beyond the range of sorrow's dart,
He lives in fields of calm eternity ;
A flower whose leaves shall never fall apart
Though gusts of half forgetfulness drift by ;
His memory blooms a rose within the heart,
And sweetest odors are the last to die.

NIGHT

CHAOS, of old, was God's dominion;
'Twas His belovéd child, His own first-born;
And He was agéd ere the thought of morn
Shook the sheer steeps of black Oblivion.
Then all the works of darkness being done
Through countless aeons hopelessly forlorn,
Out to the very utmost verge and bourn,
God at the last, reluctant, made the sun.
He loved His darkness still, for it was old:
He grieved to see His eldest child take flight;
And when His *Fiat lux* the death-knell tolled,
As the doomed Darkness backward by Him rolled
He snatched a remnant flying into light
And strewed it with the stars, and called it Night.

SOCRATES' DEATH

FROM PLATO'S PHAEDO

THEN from the prison walls they saw the sun
Folding great wings within the western skies,—
A few friends only round him there who dies.
The grinding of the poison being done,
He spake, reproved their tears, and to each one
Gave cheer and comfort, and made kind replies :
Then drank the hemlock—with his great grave eyes
Steadfast and mild. The sands were nearly run
Down through his glass of life ; he from that bed
Smiling upon them faintly, turned and said,
‘The chill is at my heart. . . . Do not forget
To pay to Æsculapius our just debt !’

And Crito closed his eyes,—for he was dead,—
Then looked up weeping—and the sun had set !

★

FROM THE PEAK

HIGH on the mountain, brother to the cloud,
I stand upon this elemental stone
As free as kings upon their native throne.
The winds which whirl the leaves on in a crowd
Whistle around the bleak crags wild and loud;
I hear the muttering and the thunder tone
Of dark and ominous storms, that not alone
Earth, but the cowering heavens, now enshroud.

Land of my birth! so looking over thee
The Poet sees from his prophetic peak,
Havoc and whirlwind brewing . . . We are free—
But powers are at work that crawl and sneak,
Yet hold, no less, the fatal lightning streak.
Be warned! This storm is aimed at Liberty.

TO BRIZO

DROWSY thou liest on thy popped bed
Inamorata of the realms of air!
Goddess or queen or spirit, passing fair,
Rise from thy slumberous pillow where is spread
In lustrous darkness round thy starry head
The wondrous wealth of thine ethereal hair—
Still whisper to me from thy dusky lair
Or Atropos shall cut the silver thread!
Clear source and fountain of my fleeting lays,
Angel of peace, and saint that comforteth,
Thy lips were on my mouth—I drew thy breath—
Thine arms enwrapt me through thy shadowy ways,—
O thou divine consoler of my days
Be near me in the darkness after death!

MORS VICTRIX

AT last had come the time long prophesied—
The world was frozen ; ice now ruled again.
Dead lay the earth's last man. Life felt Death's reign
Was o'er, and though dismayed and terrified
Spoke unto Death, "Since the last soul hath died,
Numbed with thy rancorous venom here and slain—
Since man no more exists to suffer pain,
Lie down thyself, and die." But, furious-eyed,
Ravenous and grim, Death raised his haughty head
And pointed to the stars, "Yon worlds," he said,
"With all their multitudes, were made for me,—
For *me* created and inhabited ;
And souls unborn on myriad orbs to be
Are mine, foredoomed through all Eternity !'

THE NOONTIDE GONE

IN murmuring silence of these cottage rooms,
The noontide gone, I rest beside the sea ;
And through the latticed windows, thoughtfully,
Peer down upon the crowd that, flower-like, blooms
Along the beach and where the breaker booms.
The surge of Life's and Youth's intensity
Is there. Unmoved I gaze beyond their glee
Far o'er th' unfathomable ocean's glooms.

From the dim chambers of maturer years,
One looks with lessened ardor than before ;
And through the lattice dark of hopes and fears
With small concern hails joy, and calmly hears
Love's surges beat against Life's lessening shore
As on a land that he shall touch no more.

WITH FOLDED WINGS

WHY should I like the restless, ever roam
And clip the world from shining shore to shore?
To-day, beneath their native sycamore,
And 'neath the palm to-morrow, far from home;
They pass the sea and all its snowy foam,
Its vast and restless rolling and its roar;
Mountains and vales, dread deserts they explore,
And glorious cities dim with many a dome;
Lone lakes they skim among the Pyrenees;
And in mute marble see the immortals bloom
Down the long aisles of gilded galleries;
And censers swinging, and cathedral gloom:
Why should I travel when I see all these
Within the silence of my lamp-lit room?

TO BYRON

HE with a strenuous voice of vibrant tone,
Æolian in its sweep and majesty,
Untrammelled as the heavens, and as free,
In passionate throbbings from his bosom's throne
Flung Song from the Ægean's farthest zone
Sublime in its impetuosity,—
Like to the voice of the eternal sea
Filled with a wild unfathomable moan.
O Dust! far from the Minster by the Thames,
Reft of the oriel and the organ roll,
Unniched among thy land's illustrious names,
Where is he, living, who can touch thy goal?
Whose words, as thine, within the file of Fame's
Resplendent troupe, so melt—so move the soul!

THE JOURNEY

MY path lay through a valley white as lime
In sunshine. The long grasses looked as though
Covered with frost or thinnest coats of snow.
The trees were alabaster—yet the time
Was Summer—up their trunks did crawl and climb
Ivy, like marble, and bleached mistletoe;
And while I paced, the semblance of a crow
Flew near and whispered something to a Mime
Who beckoned me to follow up the glen:
I followed through interminable glooms
Of white, up to an eminence of tombs
As thick as snow-flakes on the hills, and then—
A wind arose, and dust of buried men
Blew round such blackness as no light illumines.

MARSYAS

O Phrygian Youth! a piper of thy kind
Am I, though piping very near the ground.
Alas! I cannot make, as thou, that sound
Of silvery flutings, floating down the wind.
Though searching on the hill-tops of the mind,
That flute Minerva dropped, I have not found,
That waked the woods at Nysa, where he bound
And flayed, and threw thee from him as a rind.
We men are weak, the gods are ever strong;
Apollo still is cruel as the sea,—
Me has he tied upon that fatal tree;
Ah! by thy hand, I too shall die ere long—
Thou sweet inexorable Poësy—
Willing, but still a martyr to my song!

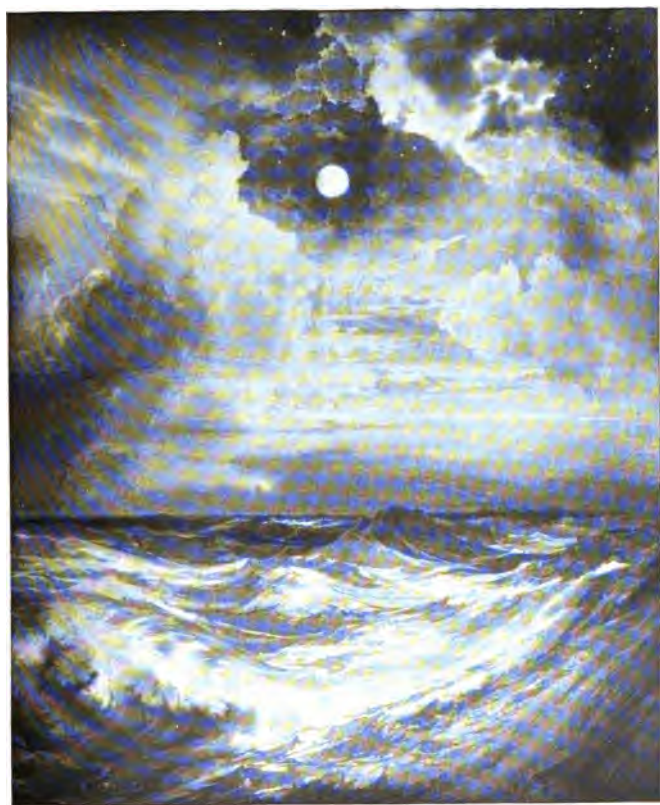
AN OLD ANCHOR ON THE COAST

BROKEN, I rust beside this Northern roar
 'Mid rocks of desolation and of doom—
 I who once dropped through waters filled with bloom
 Of lotus-lilies where flamingoes soar
In coves of El Dorado. I no more
 Shall dip in green sea-beds of glimmering gloom
 Nor hear the warm white-crested breakers boom
 Far on the stretches of the palmy shore !
Ah ! ne'er again shall these corroded hands
 Grapple the branchèd coral 'neath the waves
 To hold the good ship safe against the breeze,
Nor wake the Mermaid, dreaming in her caves
 On ocean ledges floored with fabulous sands
 Deep in the dim unfathomable seas !

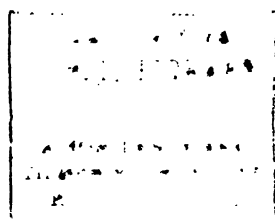
HE MADE THE STARS ALSO

•

VAST hollow voids, beyond the utmost reach
Of suns, their legions withering at His nod,
Died into day hearing the voice of God;
And seas new made, immense and furious, each
Plunged and rolled forward feeling for a beach;
He walked the waters with effulgence shod.
This being made, He yearned for worlds to make
From other chaos out beyond our night—
For to create is still God's prime delight.
The large moon, all alone, sailed her dark lake,
And the first tides were moving to her might;
Then Darkness trembled, and began to quake
Big with the birth of stars, and when He spake
A million worlds leapt into radiant light!



"Plunged and rolled forward feeling for a beach."



I STAND UPON THE BASTIONS

I STAND upon the bastions of the day;
The troublous Dawn is laboring in the skies;
Vast shapes and vague, portentous effigies,
Stalk in the clouds and threaten,—yet men say
That we are safe Yes! Safe as once were they
Feasting in Babylon when Cyrus' wiles
Drew off Euphrates, and let in his files—
His myrmidons to slaughter and dismay!
Safe—say ye? Listen! Hear ye not the sound
Of stealthy sappers tunnelling 'neath the walls?—
That ominous rumble heard below the ground
When muffled millions dig—no shouts—no calls,
But dark and secret workings all around—
Safe? . . . Safe! . . . Why wait ye till the Castle falls!

WILL THESE FADE TOO

O SORROW, sorrow, leave me now alone !
I hear the noiseless footfalls of the dead
In all the paths ; and in the blue o'erhead
I feel the yearning faces of my own.
There is each day a melancholy tone
Tolled from the cloudy towers of sunset red.
I know the wings of morning vanishéd ;
And in the child's laugh hear my manhood's moan.
O daily losses gathering to a pain,
Something is gone that will not come again !
Where is the glory fled ?—where are the gleams—
The recreant Dawn's incomparable beams ? . . .
Faded and gone ! . . . Will these fade too, and wane—
These last delusions and desired dreams ?

ST. PAUL'S SHIPWRECK

THERE under Crete soft were the skies and blue ;
Sudden the troubled heavens turned to dun,
The simoon, from swart deserts Nubian,
Raged with its furies ; famished were the crew ;
Two sennights, dreadful, wandering, drave we through
Terrific roarings of Euroclydon ;
The sky a wall of brass, no stars, no sun,
Where shrieked above us still the lost seamew ;
Sharp spears of jagged rock rose mid that roar
Black in the foam of breakers ; it was land
Death-dealing, dread ; on it we hurled and tore
The ship atwain ; then, dashed upon the sand,
By God's grace saved, lay on Mileta's shore—
There where that beast, unvenomed, fanged my
hand.

LETHE

THE angel takes my hand and downward leads
Through those dim regions where Oblivion lies.
Upon the lava-rock that vitrifies
Around us there, no flowers grow, nor weeds.
Sole on her throne sits Darkness grim, and breeds.
Each cliff with cliff in solemn blackness vies;
There are no voices there nor moans nor cries;
Slowly the inky river flows and feeds.
The angel with me stops, and from the brink—
Amid that troop of grey shades on the shore
Who pace for ages—bids me stoop and drink.
I do his hest; and mark him upward soar;
Then memory, with that draught, begins to shrink,
And I remember—ah! no ... more no
... more

THE DAYBREAK

THE Dawn has come ! With soft harmonious sound
Turn on your hinge each adamantine gate !
Crumble ye barriers ! be exterminate
All ye impenetrable doors profound
That bar the way to knowledge ; let resound
The pæan, and to Man capitulate,
To him ope your Cimmerian portals straight
Ye Powers of Darkness that our souls confound !
Young is the World, and man has just begun
To touch those havens of th' unfathomed sea
That lie enshrouded dark in mystery
In that unfooted dim dominion
Beyond aureorean reaches of the sun—
This is the daybreak of the Day to be !

THE SILENT GUEST

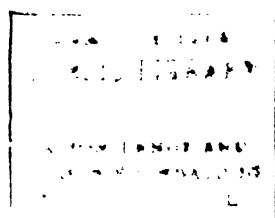
TO-NIGHT, O Death, I feel thee near again—
Cease peering in but enter at the door—
If thou must enter, as thou hast of yore.
I did not call thee, in this night of rain,
Yet thou art here—O let it be in vain!
And yet, alas! full many times before
Thou hast been near—so near! that now no more
Thou seem'st a foe, but one to end all pain.
I know thy face so well that I could weep;
For thou art with me more than any friend.
I am too young to sink to thy black Deep;
Yet, if I must, oh! gently o'er me bend,
Delude me into dreams that have no end
Until I feel—it is not Death, but Sleep.

THE HEIGHTS

STILL is Prometheus with his anguish fraught,
And each aspiring soul Thought's vulture beak
Yet feels, defiant, and will not be meek—
For peace with genius never need be sought.
'Tis in achieving only, life is wrought.
Fame's clarion peals above the highest peak,
And the Icarian mind will ever seek
The starry uplands of creative thought
O thou Empyrean Youth! who soared away
Up to the sun with thy fresh pinions free,
Then lost thy wings, and for a night and day,
Fell headlong, sheer, into the abysmal sea—
Far greater thou, than Daedalus wise and gray,
Who soaring lower, lived ingloriously!

THERE WAS A TIME

THERE was a time when o'er my gentle books
Upon the vellumed treasures and their lore,
From morn to tranced midnight would I pore.
But now, for years, with far and dreamful looks
I pass them by. Enough for me the brook's
Sweet counsel, and the torrent's roar.
I still commune with nature, more and more,
And less with man,—as in a sylvan nook's
Cool grotto sits some hermit all alone.
The ground hath lips; the stars still lead and shine
That on the shepherds over Bethlehem shone;
The fields are volumes, and each page, divine:
Few books he needs who listens at the shrine
Of Nature, and translates aright her tone.





"The warrior squadrons of the setting Sun."

THE EVENING HOSTS

ABOVE the battlement and parapet
The warrior squadrons of the setting Sun
Hurl in the Twilight's face their gonfalon ;
From scarlet tower and from minaret,
With purple pomp and pluméd violet,
In splendid phalanxes they charge upon
The approaching legions of the Evening dun—
Those grim battalions never vanquished yet.
They storm the bastions of the wavering Day
Whose crimsoned javelins fall within that host
Unconquered; they in that unequal fray
Make of those glorious troops a holocaust:
Then from the turrets on the ramparts lost
The Twilight cohorts flaunt their flag of gray.

WITHIN THE GATES

A GREATER fulgence, then, mine eyes assaulted,
And in a radiance which all suns transcended,
Low down my brow before the Throne I bended
Unworthy e'en to look upon the vaulted
Heavenly dome, much less on Him, exalted
O'er Time and Death. Slowly my vision wended
Upward ; with trust and trepidation blended,
Reverent I moved and near the Glory halted—
That Glory which was God—supreme, celestial :
No sceptre held He, but a child most holy—
A little child that beamed a look terrestrial ;
And while great wings of Spirits flamed supernal,
The Seraphs sang,—Ye must be pure and lowly
E'en as this babe to gain the Life Eternal.

THE SEA GULL

O HAD I but thy wings when storms arise,
Grey spirit of the sea and of the shore!
When the wild waters round thee rave and roar
Calm art thou 'neath the tumult of the skies.
Thy plume hath spanned the sea's immensities;
And o'er her vast and ever-shifting floor
Thou, on thy grey wing roaming, still dost soar,
Forever drawn to where the distance lies.
From the dim sea's unknowable extreme
Thou comest, wandering through lone water-ways
To cliffs empurpled and cerulean bays;
Then, rocking near some cavern's emerald gleam,
Thou seem'st the soul of halcyonian days—
The restful Spirit of the sea supreme.

THE BUILDER

AS a worn mason by a village street,
Works at a chapel day by day, alone,
And slowly hewing, places every stone,
Then some sad twilight, through the dusty heat
Treads homeward o'er the hills with weary feet,
Finds the sole light within his hamlet gone,
Enters the dark door, and there dies, unknown,
Leaving his building ever incomplete—
So I, at evening, o'er the hills shall roam,
Worn with my masonry, and Art's sharp thong,
Missing the star that led my steps so long,
And lie, at last, within my darksome home,
Leaving the rude Cathedral of my Song
Unfinished still—devoid of spire or dome.

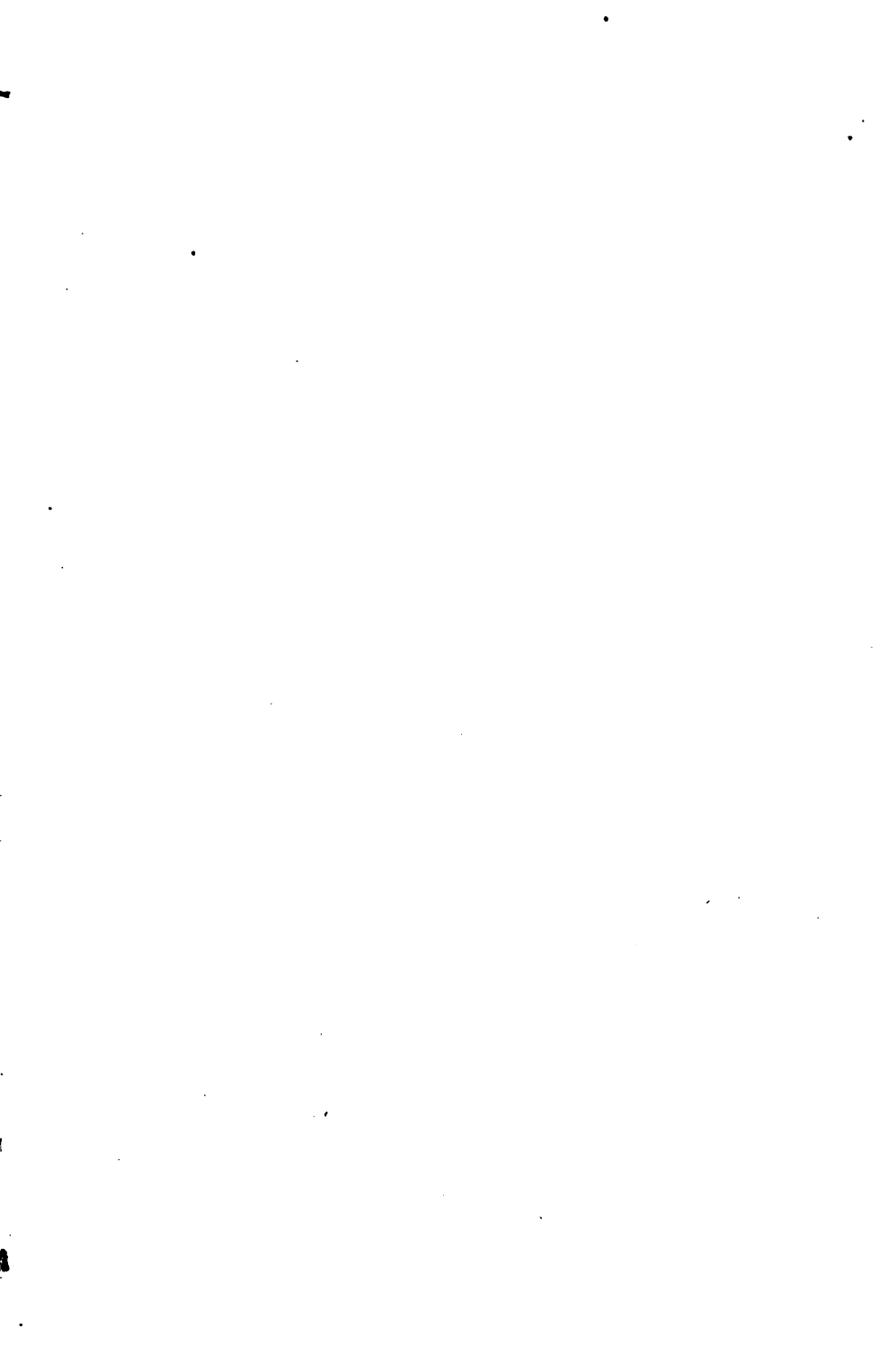
DELAY O LIGHT

DELAY awhile, delay O sinking light!
A little longer linger in the sky;
Spread not those golden pinions as to fly,
But stay for me, who watch thee from the height:
Remain! for soon,—too soon!—will come the night,
When from the crags around me here on high
Shall fade the sunset colors—all shall die,
And darkness spread her universal blight.

Eternal Darkness fold thy fateful wings!
And let the twilight we call Life—that spark—
A little longer last; that he who sings
May strive, with bleeding plumes, to touch his mark:
Delay! for he has high imaginings
Imperative to utter ere the dark.

WITHDRAW O WORLD

RECEDE! recede! all literal things that are!
Welcome the voice that is not, but that seems.
Ye rapt illusions and resplendent gleams,
Drift out of darkness to me from afar!
Ærial ministers! your gates unbar,
And give me glimpses of eternal streams;
Take all that is, but leave me all my dreams,
That solace like the presence of a star.
Recede, O World, and let the mysteries
Sweep in upon me of the Spirit's birth;
O come! ethereal unrealities,
Flood me and fill me beyond reach of dearth
With those immortal murmurs not of earth,—
Memnonian music sweeter than the sea's!



When shepherds pipe on oaten straws.

Love's Labor's Lost.

IN QUIET FIELDS:
SONNETS CHIEFLY PASTORAL

IN QUIET FIELDS

ONE lies and dreams ; there is no dissonance
In all the slumbering air; and e'en the heat—
The summer-colt that shimmers o'er the wheat—
Is still. The dells are dim with vague romance.
Sweet Echo is disconsolate—no chance
She has to-day, the traveler to cheat,
For down is on the sandals of all feet,
And soft the summer wind puts by her lance.
Far in her golden fields of calm repose,
Deep bathed within the amber afternoon,
Hangs the pale remnant of the mid-day moon ;
And Day's sweet flower—that at the evening's close
Folds like a bud to open as a rose—
Fades with the fading of this day of June.

AN IDYL

NOT in these valleys where we now recline,
But far beyond the distant mountain's brow
Lies the fair land I love. There winds are low
And soft. He of the thyrsus and the vine,
Comes with his leopards and his skins of wine.
Glimpses there are of Naiads to and fro
Flitting through groves; and faint is heard and slow
The pipe of some brown Faun beneath the pine.
There upland streams, dissolving, reach the vales;
And there are groves of ilex and of yew,
Unending valleys and Illyrian dales,
And gods reclining where the soft winds woo;
And azure seas there are, and sunset sails,
And shepherds piping on the capes of blue.

GOLDEN DAYS

I

WHO'S this a-coming through the mellow haze
Nude as young Bacchus, russet-skinned, embrowned;
His brow with clustered grapes and grape leaves
bound,
And trailing vines of scarlet all ablaze?
From golden wigwams of the Indian maize
He husks the red-grained ears; o'er stubbled ground
Bowls, in his mirth, the yellow melons round;
He dozes near the cider-press for days,
Sipping the oozéd juice of pomace lees;
And leaning on the cope of orchard walls,
Watches the golden apple till it falls;
Searches the velvet burrs 'neath chestnut trees,
And brings the partridge to him by his calls—
Who's he that so delights in things like these?....

GOLDEN DAYS

II

WHO'S he that so delights in such soft ease?
Who, dreamless, lolls throughout the dreamy days?
Who spreads the dim and amethystine haze
In all the dells, and for the full-fed bees
Bursts the late pear, and makes its mell increase?
Who marks the glint of wings in woodland ways—
The gold of flickers, and the blue of jays?
Who wafts the thistle down to far-off seas;
And spins the spider's threads across the fields
Of evening, golden in the setting sun?
Who, plucking clusters that the ripe vine yields,
Stains his lips purple? Ah! there is but one—
Autumn, that drowsy Faun, who slowly steals
Down through the woods away—and all is dun!

ABOUT THE HOUR

ABOUT the hour the vivid sunset makes
The beauteous river's long unrippled blue
Turn to more sumptuous and refulgent hue
Reflecting all its clouds and scarlet flakes;
And when no wind the reedy patches shakes,
Then, drifting slowly in his still canoe,
The fisher feels the silence through and through,
And floats so noiseless on these little lakes
In eddies of great rocks which rise and jut
Above their gravelly shallows, golden-clear,
That the small marsh-bird seems to have no fear
So silent is the air, so hushed, so mute,
That e'en the sentinel heron does not hear
But stands erect, nor drops his lifted foot.

AWAITING SUMMONS

FILLED with foreboding awe, beneath his trees
He waits the Voice. The seven seals of dread
Are set. No word of comfort may be said.
Above him e'en the harmless summer breeze
Brings apprehension, nor can hope appease,
As ever hangs above his conscious head—
Held by a more attenuated thread—
The horror of the sword of Damocles.

So one within a donjon hourly waits,
Doomed to the block, yet knowing not the day;
Hears unreturning prisoners leave their room,
And ominous uproar round the inner gates;
Yet still unsummoned, slowly wastes away
In dire anticipation of his doom.

THE FADING LIGHT

THE dim aureola of the western glow
Lingers above the river hill-top's rim,
And the sweet huntress, now a virgin slim,
Draws, in immortal fields, that silver bow,
Fair as in far Illyria long ago
In immemorial days divinely dim.
In lessening light the glimmering islands swim.
As twilight folds her pinions, soft and slow,
The gateways of the night begin to ope,
And through them throng as in a dazzling dream,
The stars, that up the gentle evening's slope
Through amaranthine meads of heliotrope,
Tread on imperial, haughty and supreme,
Shod with those sandals of eternal beam.

BY WILLOWY SHORES

LOOK out upon the river and give thanks
For glimpses of far islands—these dim views
Between the willow branches of faint blues
That lie upon the waters—azure blanks
Of beauty, studded, here and there, with ranks
Of arrow-headed weeds, where his strange hues
The dragon-fly displays. . . . The pensive Muse,
Secluded from the world, by willowy banks,
From immemorial times has loved to stray
Along the murmuring margin of fair streams,
Where she may pace, anear the close of day,
Serene, with troops of her own airy Dreams;—
And take the wide world over, so meseems,
Her sandals could not touch diviner clay!

THE FRONTIER

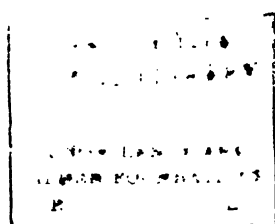
O SOLDIER, treading through the long day's heat,
With tattered banner and with drooping crest,
Now as the sun sinks down thy purpled West;
Thou who hast come so far with aching feet,
Thou, who must march and never canst retreat,
Art thou not weary of the bootless quest?
Look'st thou not forward to a time of rest?
Sweet will it be—beyond all telling sweet—
After long marches with red danger fraught;
The wakeful bivouac; the assault and flight—
After thy scars of glory; sore distraught;
To camp afar,—beyond defeat and fight,—
Wrapped in the blanket of a dreamless night,
Out past the pickets and the tents of thought!

SUNRISE ON THE MARSH

DEEP down the sky, as yet Day sleeps serene;
She does not stir, she lies as in a swoon.
Silent the marshes, save at times, the croon
Of some lone heron in the swamp's dark green.
The lyric fingers of the wind, unseen,
Play on the lute-strings of the reeds—a tune
To be remembered! All the glassed lagoon
Is hushed as is the desert's void demesne;
When, under the horizon far, I hear
The clarions of the dawn—how faint up-borne!
And low above the dying twilight's bier
A few faint-flushed and feathery clouds appear;
Then—o'er the far savanna's utmost bourn—
Flare the wide wings of the flamingo morn!



"Flare the wide wings of the flamingo morn."



INSUFFICIENCY

TO W. H. G.

THE spirit cannot spread at will, her wings;
The dust clings to us, holding us to earth;
Some vague degeneracy of spiritual birth
Grapples us to the ground, and often clings
Like lead about us; Heliconian springs
Then gush in vain; while ever joy and mirth
Seem palsied by an universal dearth:
Yet sometimes, in such vein, the Poet sings;
And if he cannot always touch the mark
The soul has set, it is to be forgiven;
Nor does that skyey minstrel, the rapt lark,
Chant ever at the very gate of heaven,
But oft, by changing moods of spirit driven,
Pipes plaintive notes, low by his nest, at dark.

THE THRUSH

OFT have I seen at eventide the thrush
Embowered in the topmost branches fair,
Warbling her love-lay in the golden air,
As on her beating breast the sunset flush
Lay like a glory, and the twilight hush
Deepened between the sobs of song that there
Filled the dark groves with eloquent despair;
While all the listening laurel underbrush
Trembled and thrilled its myriad leaves among,
Till the white wood-nymph, as she silent stood,
Leaned forward her sweet neck a-listening long,—
Held captive in the darkening solitude,
Chained by the necromancer of the wood,
Enraptured by the ecstasies of song!

AN INVITATION

MY box-wood, *arbor vitæ*, and the pine
We planted in our youth, are standing green
About the porch, though Boreal blasts blow keen,—
Friend of past days, come worship at the shrine
We love; sit at that table where no wine
They need who quaff immortal Hippocrene,
And from the hand of Poësy, serene,
Sup on Olympian viands all divine.
Then leave that buzzing hive, the city mart;
Come, while my gnarl'd oaks hold their wealth of
snows,
Come to a country hearth, and let your heart—
Mellowed by midnight, while the back-log glows—
Touch on the themes most dear—the Muse and Art,—
Till in the east unfolds th' Aureorean rose.

AN AUGUST SHOWER

THE gilded Indian of the village vane
Swirls to the east; and slow the tall tree tops
Wave with the fitful wind that stirs, and stops,
And stirs anew; while gently falls again
The gracious benefaction of the rain.
The pendent garlands of the garden hops
Sway with the breeze; and the blown peach tree drops
Her globes of crimson in the grassy lane.
The thunder, rumbling o'er the distant plain,
Rolls hither from the fields and darkening fells;
The brooklet in the meadow slowly swells;
The rain is come, and gone. Past is the heat.
Happy the cattle in the clover dells—
Happy the flocks that range the stubbled wheat.

THE NYMPH

I N quiet stillness of a wildwood dell
Knee deep with fern, beneath the hemlock's screen
A brook, sliding the mossy rocks atween,
Plunged into foam and music, as it fell
Sheer to a pool, dark as a cloistered cell :
'Twas in the afternoon, in this demesne,
I saw the goddess coming through the green ;
The dazzle of her beauty's miracle
Smote me as with a gleaming scymetar ;
She 'lighted . . . panting, while her sister wings
Pulsed . . . slowly—as a butterfly's, that are
A-poise upon a flower the summer brings ;
I knew her by immortal murmurings :
'Twas Psyche, white-limbed, glowing like a star !

THE FIRST HOAR-FROST

THE meads to-day are white with rime,—no mirth
Comes from the leafless thickets on the hill
Where birds once choired; and along the rill,
Ice-bound, no rippling music, but a dearth
Of cheer on this the day of Winter's birth:
Yet while the frosts the dormant wheat fields fill
We know that warmly beats, beneath this chill,
The unextinguishable pulse of Earth.

And though my life's December spreads its gray,
Lightly, in this first frost, within my hair,
My spirit soars a falcon, now, in sooth,
More eager for the zenith and her prey.
Why count the years while in our breast we bear
The bard's unalterable heart of Youth!

THE SUSQUEHANNA FROM THE CLIFF

DEDICATED TO H. H. H., ESQ.

UPON Salunga's laurelled brow at rest
With evening and with thee, as in a dream
Life flows unrippled even as thy stream :
Below, the islands jewel all thy breast ;
The dying glories of the crimson west
Are mirrored on thy surface till they seem
Another sunset, and we fondly deem
The splendors endless, e'en as those possessed
In youth, which sink, alas ! to duller hue
As years around us darken and but few
Faint stars appear, as now appear in thee.
How softly round thy clustered rocks of blue
Thou murmurest onward ! —oh ! may we pursue
Our way as calmly to the eternal sea !

THE SONNET

STILL let a due reserve the Muse attend
Who threads the Sonnet's labyrinth. As some bell
That tolls for vespers in a twilight dell,
So in the octave, let her voice suspend
Her pomp of phrase. The sestet may ascend
Slowly triumphant, like an organ-swell
In opulent grandeur rising—pause, and dwell
With gathering glories to its dolphin end :

So, oft at eve around the sunset doors,
From up-piled splendors of some crimsoned cloud
Storm-based with dark—unrolling like a scroll—
Forth th' accumulated thunder pours
Across the listening valleys, long and loud,
With low reverberations roll on roll !

INDIAN SUMMER

HOW still the groves! And has some silver flute
Ceased suddenly? The Summer days are sped;
The earth is quiet; and far overhead
All the blue altitudes of air are mute;
And those Æolian harps are destitute
Of music, for sweet Melody is dead,
And Song to Silence in the woods is wed.
No longer now we hear the thrush salute
The laurels with soft-throated ecstasies.
Where Summer hummed with buzzing sound, we see
The straw-built hives, mute with immurmurous bees.
No sound is here; but clear and distantly,
Down the dim aisles of fading memory,
Drifts the deep plaint of countless threnodies.

SOME PEAK OF HIGH ACHIEVE

'Se Tu Segui La Tua Stella'.—Dante

'TIS hard to be forgot, to have our name
Fade from a world we even half despise;
And men have done gold deeds of vast emprise
To be remembered only, so that Fame
Might fix them in her amber. Can we blame
Such spirits, yearning for the stars and skies,
If, courting death, she them emparadise?
Mere love—mere life, for these, were all too tame!
So as man's night comes on, fain would he weave
His name around some deathless star, or die
To give it to a flower. Ah! but to leave,
O'er foot-worn wastes of mediocrity,
Some peak unscalable of high achieve
To daze the dim blue of Futurity!

IN A VINEYARD OF ASTI

ITALY

O NYMPH of cheer, that lurks within the vine,
You shall not so elude me as you think!
Eyes shall be bright for you, and cheeks be pink,
Though lurking cool in clusters you recline.
On cheese of Parma, some day we shall dine,
Faunian enough to make the Cyclops blink.
O Sprite of Asti! there shall be the clink
Of fluted glasses foamed with golden wine:
Some eve upon the Corso, down at Rome,
Giulio and I shall find you, bottled trim,
And sipping softly, hear the hiss and foam
Of beaded bubbles bursting round the brim;
Then walk up to the Pincio for a whim
And watch the sunset aureole the Dome.

WINTER WOODS

'TIS sweet to wander through new-fallen snow
Far in the wooded upland miles from town,
With head bent forward and eyes looking down
All unenticed by the surrounding show—
The stir of small birds in the laurel low,
Or partridge whirring by on wings of brown;
Still wearing on the forehead as a crown
The recollections of the long ago;
And while the feet are moving 'mid the cold,
To pace beneath the olive and the vine;
At every step to tread through temples old;
To lie on Capri, basking by the pine,
And see far Naples where the sunset brine
Makes her a pearl within a shell of gold!

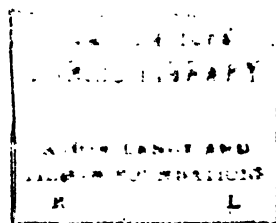
NOVEMBER

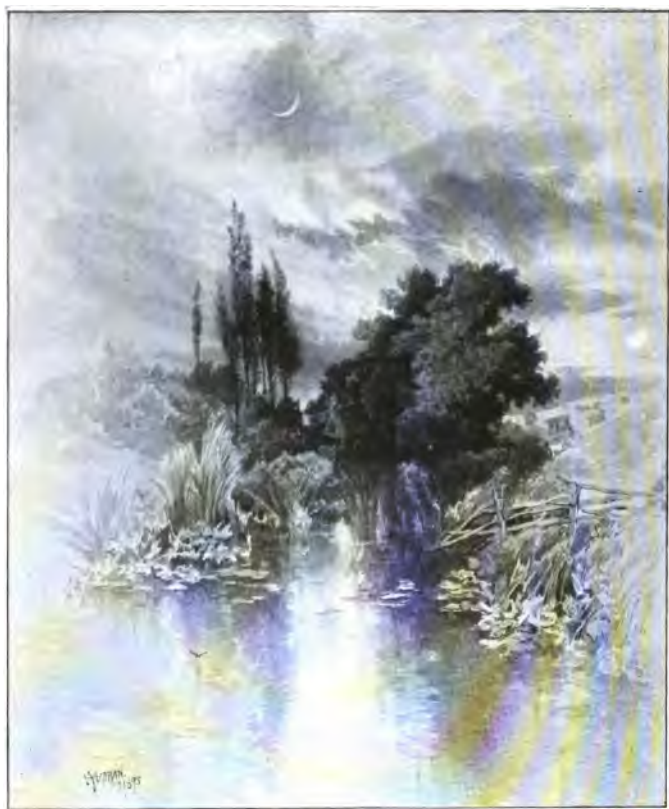
A STATELY figure walking through the wood;
Her features faded; in her eye a tear;
Her face the grave of beauty, sad, severe;
A queen dethroned and in her solitude.
Her crimson robes that long the winds withstood,
Now trailing torn and dark throughout the year.
In her pale hands the pendent ivy, sere;
Stript of her coronal; in widowhood;
Yet still remembering her magnificence,
She walks superbly through the leafless glades;
She feels the splendor of her opulence
Has faded from her as the leaf's, that fades;
A queen indeed! in royal impotence
She sweeps—how proudly! down into the shades.

FEEDING THE PIGEONS

VENICE

SHE is a chrysolite ! her manners, too,
Are pure Venetian, haughty, yet endearing.
Didst ever see, my Claudio, such a bearing?
Just watch her as the pigeons round her woo
For more caresses,—voice like some dove's coo !
And with that face so saint-like yet so daring—
By Bacchus ! as they say here in your swearing,
She is as perfect as a drop of dew !
Yet she is of the South—the counterpart
Of vengeance with its hidden venom'd dart
Hush ! for the gargoyles hear ! . . . Though white as
curds
That sweet soft hand—that hand that feeds the birds—
If you should hint about it certain words,
Would plunge its poisoned poniard through your
heart.





"What time the silver sickle of the moon."

EVENING

TO S.

'TIS sweet at evening when the light of Mars
Glow softly earthward over vale and dune,
To saunter, solaced by the quiet tune
The evening sings with no discordant jars;
The cattle, dreaming, stand about the bars,
Where ripe wheat yellows all the hills of June,
What time the silver sickle of the moon
Reaps down, in golden swaths, the western stars.
The twilight seems to tremble in a swoon.
The dying thunders roll o'er dale and scar;
In the still pool the bittern sees the star;
The voices of the night begin to moan;
A single bell has ceased to toll afar,
And silence listens, stiller than a stone.

ADONIS TO APOLLO

WHY do I seal these lips and never sing
Of love, I who so many a time have sung?
Ah! passionate lips from my own lips have wrung
Love ere it reached to song! How could I fling
Love into verse whose poignant aspic's sting
Silenced all voice! Love to these lips has clung
So fiery close, speech could not find among
Her burning words, one word whose eagle wing
Could reach the cloud we soared in—she and I!
She would not hear my song; and on my mouth
Laid her hot hand, and like the parchéd south
Hungered for rain. O Love! though I should die,
What could Love do but water such a drouth?
I was made mute by Love's own ecstasy.

FAME

WHAT does it profit, all the praise of men,
When these our ears are filled with silent dust?
What solace in the monumental bust
Which nevermore can reach our distant ken?
Better to let the fluent brush and pen
Drop from the hand into corrosive rust
Than feel this feverish and ignoble lust
For mere men's praises, never heard again.
And I, in sooth, have oft been much to blame,
Listening the trump th' inglorious goddess blows,
And somewhat scathed by that injurious flame,
Spake rashly then, but now as one who knows,—
That he who lets Love pass to clutch at Fame,
Gathers but ashes for life's sweetest rose.

THE WEDDING MORN

TO M. S. M.

LET the sweet Dawn kiss darkness from the ground,
And let the sun rise like a globe of fire
Above the sea, and in his strong desire
Rosy the gables of her home, and round
Her lattice linger; breezes from the Sound
Turn all the wastes of reed into one lyre
For her; and swarms of marsh-birds in a choir
Sing in the rushes till the shores resound;
And let old Ocean cease his rude uproar
And waft in pearls, and all his roseate shells;
And on the top of his foam-crested swells
Let the poised curl hang whiter than before,—
For here to-day, upon this Island shore,
Comes the sweet melody of marriage bells!

THE COUNTRY BURIAL—NOVEMBER

THE day is dull, and the last leaf is sped
From tree and vine. The flowers are gone, and weeds
Border the fence-row, as the year recedes.
In drizzling mist slowly the mourners tread
Following the hearse at the procession's head
Up to the church-yard, far above the meads,
There where the parson, by the new grave reads,
Dust unto dust!—and all the world seems dead:

But here come troops of children, young and sweet,
Down the steep lane;—they are the Future's flowers
Which soon shall bloom for other eyes than ours
In years to be; while all about the feet
Are silent monitors of nature's powers—
And in the ground sprouts the next summer's wheat.

THE POET

THROUGH beds of asphodel he walks along
To amaranthine meadows of the prime;
He is in love with hope, and longs, in time,
To add one bead more of denouncement strong
Unto the rosary 'gainst all human wrong;
He hopes besides—so high his wishes climb—
To leave, in the wild garden of his rhyme,
Some marvelous lily of immortal song.
And still he gives full freely of his store,
Walking this world as one entrancedly;
And in life's turbid wave, forevermore,
Drops the crown jewel of his Melody,
As one who from some cliff upon the shore
Lets fall, unseen, a ruby to the sea.

DEAR ARE THESE FIELDS

WHEN by the fence-row blooms the golden-rod,
When days are dreamy, tempting one to ease,
I leave my house—a wren's nest in the trees—
And tread the dear fields I so oft have trod.
Here my impassioned father walked the sod
And flung Shakesperean numbers down the breeze
As slow we paced as brothers. Joys like these
Were ours, not mine, since him the cold dull clod
Long claims, alas! Yet still, I softly tread,
Musing within these groves, and find repose.
And oft, at eve, when pales the western rose,
I hear again the sounding phrases read,
As he enraptured, dwelt on some fine close
Timonian,—Ah, I hear each word he said!

ACROSS THE YEARS

THE old rememberable barn—how grey
It loomed above the orchard and the spring!
The orchard where the robin used to sing
Building his nest beneath the blossomed spray.
Where are the rose-bud maidens of that day?
Some, like the birds, afar have taken wing;
Some sleep below, but memories oft they bring
Sweet as remembered odors of the hay.

Ah, yet once more across the shadowy years
She meets me in the gloaming. Down the lane
We hear the dropping of the pasture bars.
It is the trysting hour, and kindly stars
Bloom in the twilight trees....O Love! O Tears!
Oh Youth that was—that will not come again!

MY NATIVE STREAM

TO Vallombrosian valleys let them go;
To steep Sorrento, or where ilex trees
Cast their gray shadows o'er Sicilian seas;
Dream at La Conca D'Oro, catch the glow
Of sunset on the Ischian cliffs, and know
The blue Ionian inlets, where the breeze,
Leaving some snow-white temple's Phidian frieze,
Wafts their light shallop languorously slow.
Let me lie here, far off from Zante's shore,
Where Susquehanna spreads her liquid miles;
To watch the circles from the dripping oar;
To see her halcyon dip, her eagle soar;
To drift at evening round her Indian isles,
Or dream at noon beneath the sycamore.

LA PRIMAVERA

AT morning when the year is young and pale,
While yet the azure of the trembling skies
Is soft as is the blue within the eyes
Of some sweet child; when in the quiet vale
About the feet, and in the far-off dale,
Close to the pool the earliest swallow flies;
When down within the dell the dim haze lies
And dreams; when from the thicket near, the quail
Pipes to his mate; and the brown sparrow sings
As if his soul were in his rapturous trills;—
Then the fair goddess with her gauzy wings
Paces the meads, serenely, toward the hills.
It is the Spring come back again, who brings
Hope to the heart amid her daffodils.

BAY LEAVES

IMMORTAL laurel, of no growth terrene,
Gather, ye Muses, in Olympian air;
'Tis for a shepherd, loved of Pan, to wear.
Behold him, lying on the headland green,
That juts above the sea in this demesne,
As still as sculptured marble and as fair.
Ye will not wake him if ye crown him there;
Wreathe him, the while he seems to sleep serene.
The syrinx, now, lies useless by his head
Was that a sigh within the cypress near?
O soft, ye Muses! —softly round him tread,
Bring all your late reluctant laurels here;
Relax your haughty mien; ye need not fear
To crown this Dorian now—for he is dead!

UPON THE HEARTH

A TREE will prove a blessing all life long ;
From birth to death it brings us naught but good ;
Its shade will make a pleasant solitude,
For one who lies and dreams the grass among ;
What golden globes upon its limbs are hung
In summer ; and when dead, its burning wood
Will foster sweetness in the poet's mood,
And hum upon his hearth and help his song.
Its death is like the day's, for still it throws
Its roseate light lingering around our rooms ;
As slow the fire its last of life consumes,
It sinks to embers like to sunset snows,
And dying, even in its ashes, glows
With bright remembrance of its spring-time blooms.

THE EVENING COMES

THE evening comes; the boatman with his net
Poles his canoe, and leaves it on the shore;
So low the stream he does not use the oar;
The umber rocks rise like a parapet
Up through the purple and the violet,
And the faint-heard and never-ending roar
Of moving waters, lessens more and more,
While each vague object looms a silhouette:
The light is going; but low overhead
Poises the glory of the evening star;
The fisher, silent on the rocky bar,
Drops his still line in pools of fading red,
And in the sky, where all the day lies dead,
The clouded moon unsheathes her scymetar.

IN ITALY

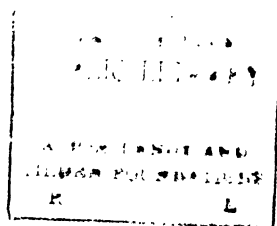
NOT Nemi charms me with her olive trees,
Nor fair Frascati—at the close of day
Gemming the Alban Mount—a pearl astray:
The rampant Centaurs of the ruined frieze;
The immemorial Caryatides;
The marvels of the famed Flaminian Way;
The wide Campagna's reaches, lone and gray;—
All unallured I still can look on these.
Unalienated yet by spire or dome,
By cliff-built citadel, or stately pine,
Or all the Naiads of Italian rills,
My heart leaps westward o'er the rolling brine
To bask once more upon the purple hills—
The Appalachian ridges round my home!

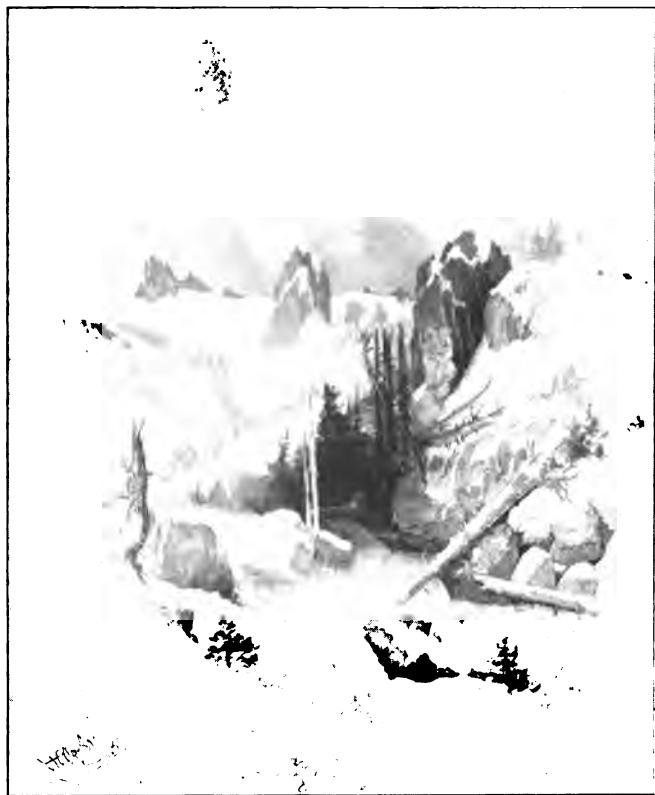
WHY DO WE SING

WHY do we sing?—the world has sung its lay
Sweeter than we can hope to sing;
Of all things sweet is there left one sweet thing—
But one—for us to say?
What can we utter new at this old day?
As some late-coming birds', the songs we bring
Are dulled by earlier songs of spring.
Why do we sing?—the world is deaf and gray;
We know full well our words 'twill never read,
But leave them in the dust;
We know—Ah, well we know!—it takes no heed
Of song the sweetest sung; that not a crust
It gives in life; in death no praise—no meed.
Why do we sing? Alas! because we must.

THE EVENING BREEZE

THE light is waning, and the gentle air
Touches the shallow pools along the shore
Not roughly, but as if it still forbore
To spoil that mirrored surface sleeping fair.
The water-lilies seem to have no care
But dream on in their silence; and the oar
Sleeps in the bateau by the sycamore.
I feel the zephyr's breath that here and there
Bends the poised arrow-heads, and interlocks
Gently, their barbs; and on the maple, shows
The under silver of its leaves, and goes
Landward so faintly that the twittering flocks
Of small birds settling down upon the rocks
Cease, in the dusk, their soft adagios.





"The gaunt gray Winter mounts his stormy throne."

DECEMBER

TO H.

THE snow lies white upon the frozen plain
And loudly blows the hyperborean blast;
His cohorts armed with lances of the rain
Tilt fiercely 'gainst me and go charging past;
The darling summer that we loved—in vain,
O where is she and all her gold of yore?
Far—far the naiad of the brook has flown,
Her reeds are tuneless on the icy shore;
Gleams from the wood, white as Carrara's stone,
The Dorian column of the sycamore;
O'er barren hill-tops girt with windy trees
The songless thickets make their chilly moan;
And on the high crags where the wan snows freeze,
The gaunt gray Winter mounts his stormy throne.

THE CLOSE OF DAY

THE sun is sinking softly down the sky,
And all the air is growing hushed and still.
A tinge of rose has touched the purple hill
Where slow the silver river murmurs by.
The busy day has run the mill-race dry;
The wheel rests, unrevolving, by the mill,
Where, like an amber thread, the dwindled rill
Slips past the ripening slopes of yellow rye.
As yet the fish is sun-tipped on the vane,
Though cottage lamps are lighted 'neath the boughs;
At rest, within the furrow, stand the plows;
And homeward o'er the hill-top goes the wain;
While in a dusty glory all the cows
Come winding, slowly, up the golden lane.

LA SORELLA MIA

THAT day when thou wast in the church-yard laid
Can I forget? Thou wert so passing fair,
Thy sweet neck like the lily, and thy hair
Gold-chestnut on thy brow. O gentle Maid,
Who would have thought thy loss could so invade
The sunshine of my years, and everywhere
Make my remembrance of thee my despair—
Thou who art but a visionary shade!
Would I had loved thee more e'er thou hadst fled
Far from these fields—that tender hand of thine
Had oftener, in those twilights, lain in mine
To comfort and console. Would I had fed
Thy heart with more affection—now thou'rt dead,
Alone I drink this wormwood for my wine

BY THE RIVER AT SUNSET

THE sting of this tarantula of toil,
The glitter of some vague Golconda's gold,—
These goad us through our lives. We men have sold
Our birthright for this pottage—drudge and moil.
Not only cities now our souls embroil
In haste, but in each hamlet too, behold
The roaring wheels of hurry on are rolled,—
This seething serpent never stops to coil.

Thou silent sun! now sinking down the dale;
Thou river fair! unrippled by an oar;
Restful yet mighty emblems ye, all hail!
Teach your repose to man forevermore,
That he upon life's lake that knows no shore
May move as peaceful as a folded sail.

THE SYRINX

ONE evening by the velvet vale that leads
Th' unrippled course of that Arcadian rill,
Where all the golden air is hushed and still
Above the rushes and dusk water-weeds
That sentinel the margin of dim meads,
Sudden there was a stir—there was a thrill
That trembled to its heart each daffodil—
Pan, like a satyr, lurked within the reeds,
Watching the white nymph Syrinx where she stood ;
He chased her through the lush-green water-ways,
And clasp't,—but reeds!—not her whom he pursued—
Then made of these a pipe, so sweet, though rude,
That pastoral Poets, listening, on rare days,
Envy the god his reedy roundelays.

SUBMISSION

'TIS well, stretched out beneath the yellow trees,
Deep in the hollow near the silent run,
To watch for hours the leaves, as one by one,
They flutter to the ground,—here where no breeze
Is seen, yet where invisible zephyrs please
The grateful cheek; while ever and anon
From upland woods, one hears the cruel gun
Startle the echoes in this vale of peace:
'Tis well to leave the world, or dearest friend,
And in these Autumn ferns alone to lie;
To feel that life is drawing to an end
E'en as the leaves, that drift adown the sky;
T' endure that Fate we cannot comprehend,
And like the Year, submit, and learn to die.

THE DUSK

A GENTLE air is in the twilight sky ;
The clouds are spirits, waving shadowy wings
Above the purple hills. The hour brings,
From o'er the woods, the whippoorwill's lone cry ;
Faint voices low from out the gloaming sigh ;
Afar, some spirit of the belfry rings
Softly, the evening bells ; and silence clings
Like some loved arm around us, long laid by.
No other sound the sombre stillness mars—
All hushed as are the poplar's minarets ;
The dusky cattle dozing by the bars
Seem 'gainst the sky but shadowy silhouettes ;
And now above the hills, the first few stars
Pace their steep paths and wear their coronets.

BELOVED DALES

THOSE words believe not for they were not true,
That lauding other lands disparaged mine;
If I have sung the olive and the pine;
If still from half-closed eyelids looking through,
I dreamed of Capri, dimly vague and blue;—
If I have praised the castles of the Rhine,
Or Dorian inlets of the Ægean brine,
I have not therefore lost my love for you
O River islands that in clusters lie
As beautiful as clouds! ye are my own!
Beloved dales, and crags that touch the sky,
The tendrils of my heart for years have grown
Around you all—ye cannot be o'erthrown,—
Ye hold my heart, and shall until I die!

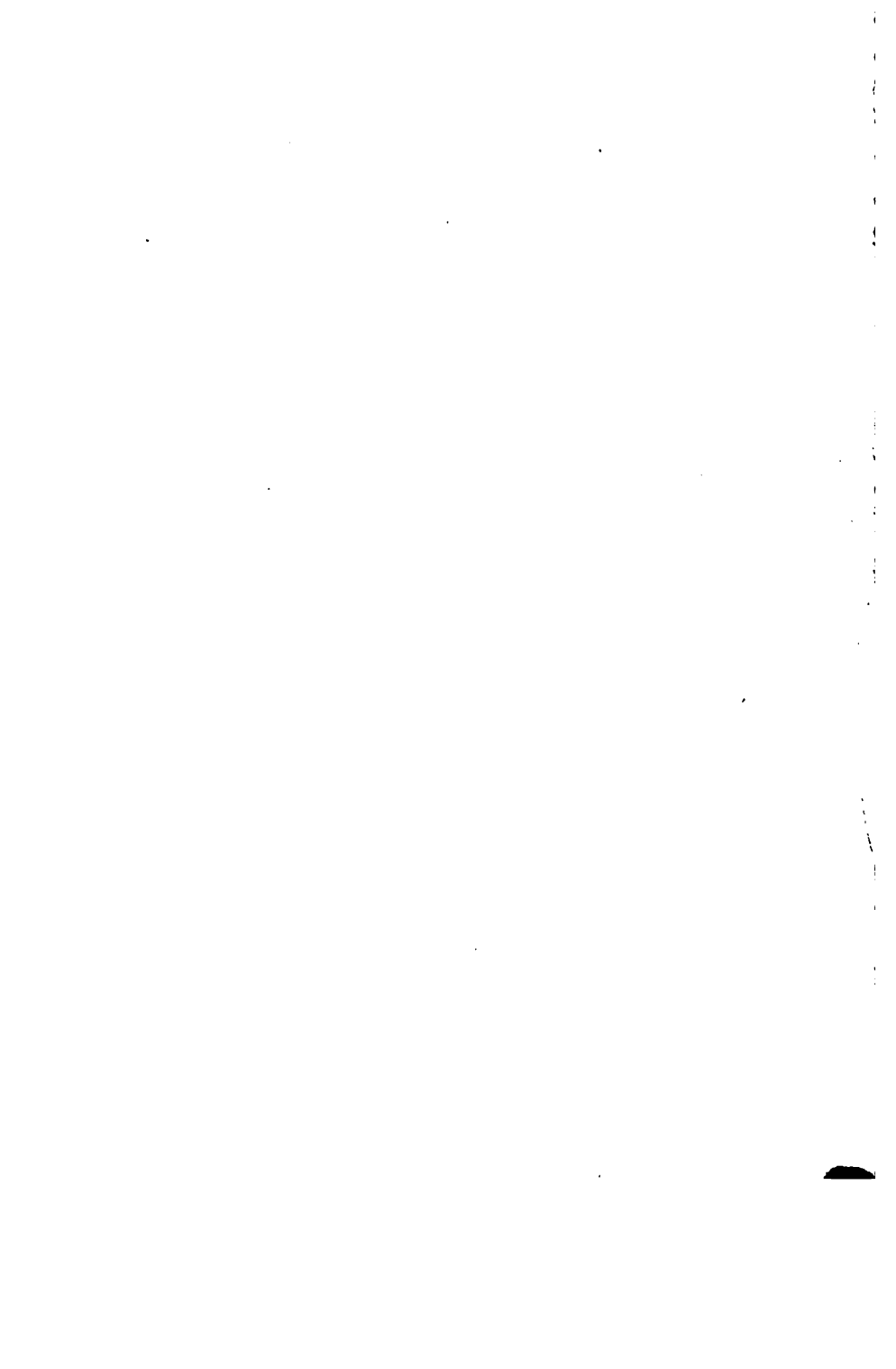
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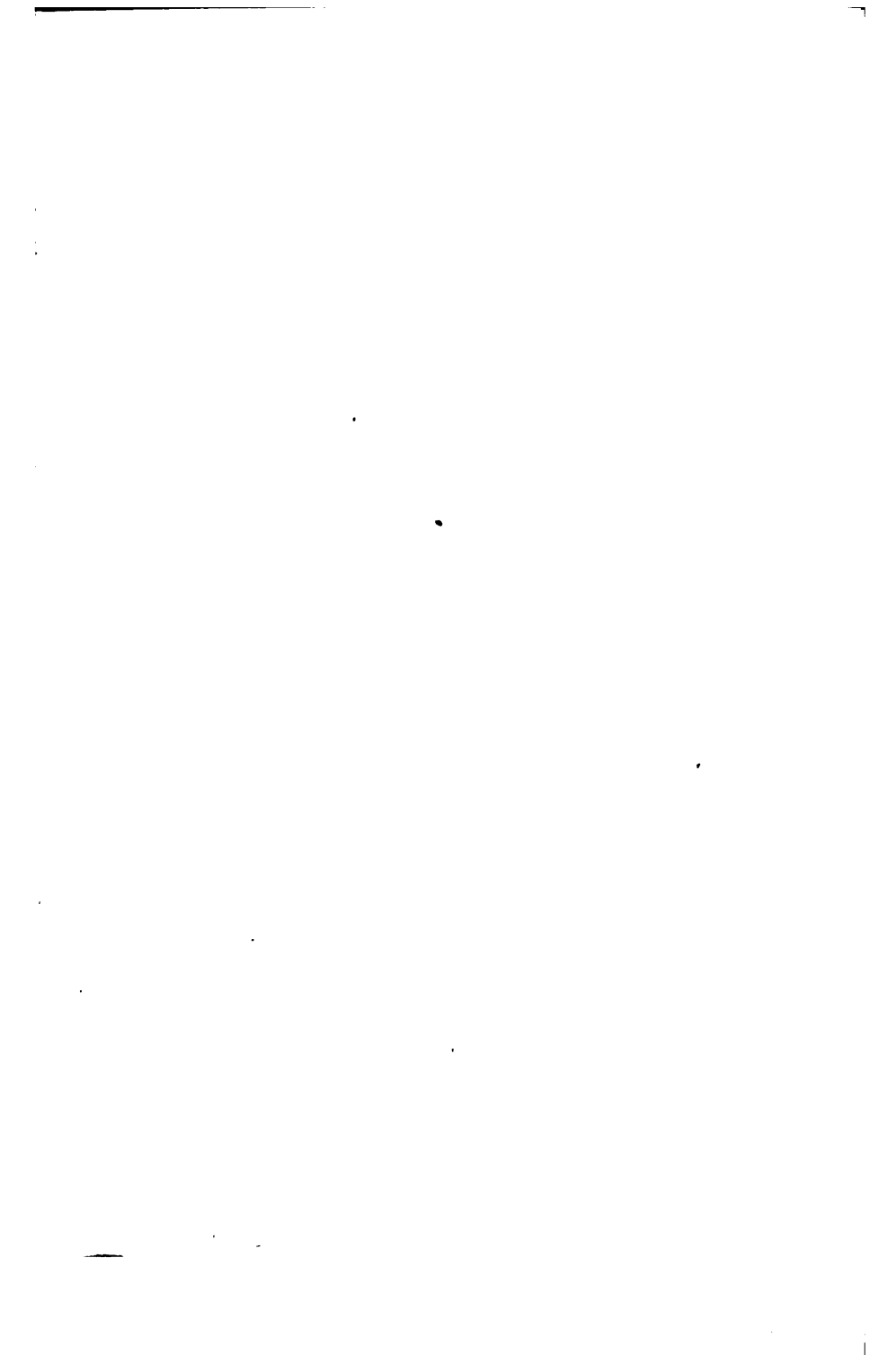
AN AUGUST THRENE

THE plowman slowly down the furrow goes.
The harvest fields are empty—bare and shorn.
The standing squadrons of the tasselled corn
Turn goldener each day in golden rows.
The yellow peach within the orchard grows
Encrimsoned toward the sun; and faintly borne
O'er dale and dell, fond fancy hears the horn
September from her phantom hill-side blows.
Yet in the heart the fragrance of the rose—
The summer's rose—lingers with eloquence.
Nor can the autumn's rare magnificence,
Nor her soft voices and adagios—
For summer gone—bring balm or recompense,
Or soothe the sadness that the soul o'erflows.

THE GLOAMING

THE tree tops tremble with the gentle air;
Cool as a sister's fingers on my brow
I feel the fondling of the zephyr now
As if some delicate spirit touched my hair.
The wings of twilight, opening darkly fair,
Shed round their velvet glamour, and the glow,
Pale on the western pyre, is burning low;
Hush! for the Day is kneeling down in prayer.
Her life is o'er and she is moving on
Into the yawning caverns of the Vast;
Into the hollows void of moon or sun,
Down to the dim irrevocable Past.
Yet shall she thread those doors, nor look aghast—
She walked in light until her race was run.





NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

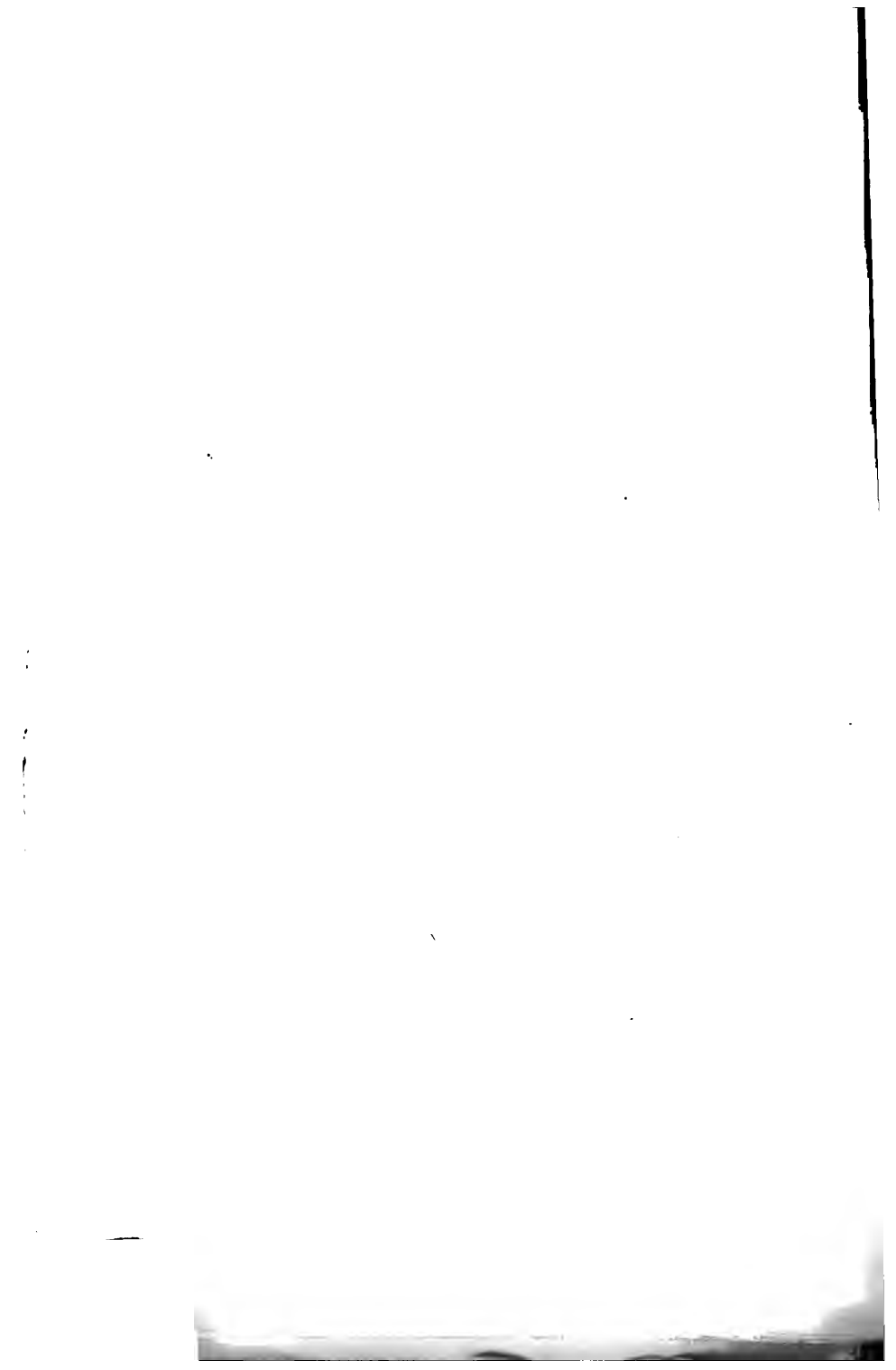
In the hope of attaining variety, it has been the aim in making the preceding selection from some three hundred Sonnets, to choose such as show a diversity of theme and treatment, rather than a sequence of thought, hence the inclusion of certain pastoral subjects.

It will be seen by an analysis of the Sonnets that no "quatorzens" have been admitted, but that the majority of the Sonnets are in the Miltonic, and the remainder in the true Guittonian structure. There are, however, some experiments and innovations upon these two legitimate and established forms, in which the critical reader may be perhaps interested. Such innovations have in no case lessened the difficulty of the form, but have rather

increased it; nor have they been made at hazard, but with a definite aim, for a purpose, and upon art principles which the Author believes to be sound.

A few errors found in the first edition have been eliminated from this; some others, chiefly of a typographical character, still remain, but the reader is asked generously to overlook these, as the first edition was electrotyped, and the difficulty of making changes will be apparent.

The author desires to express his obligation to Messrs. Chas. Scribner's Sons; to the Century Co.; to The Lippincott Co.; to Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co., for permission to reprint Sonnets which appeared in their Magazines; and to Messrs. Macmillan & Co., for courtesies extended.



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FINIS

